



M A R C H N E W S S u m m e r 2 0 1 5

Dear Friends and Family,

**Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart,
as working for the Lord, not for human masters (Col 3:23 NIV)**

As you might expect the past few months have sped by as we have sought to adapt to our new location/church/ministry/employment situation.

We are starting to feel we are making connections and beginning to feel like we 'fit' back into British culture in general ...However, building relationships takes time, and by definition, pioneering a new project is full of challenges. At times we are aware of a certain stress which can be triggered by fear of failure, the unknown nature of how things might develop, the sense of our inadequacy and unpreparedness, lack of gifting etc. etc.

Yet we remain convinced that God has brought us here to the parish and the surrounding area, and we are simply trying to rest in that certainty and allow God to lead and guide us day by day, bringing along the people and the invitations He wants us to respond to.

In terms of accommodation, it was recently decided that we would not be moving onto the estate where the vision for the project was focussed. This was for practical reasons out with our control. On one hand this has been positive; helping to give us a sense of putting down roots - unpacking our books and putting up our pictures and making the house feel more like a home. However it does complicate how we move forward trying to reach the people on the estate when we are not living among them.

We have started to work with a group of people - mostly drawn from the parish - who have felt God's call to be involved in this Fresh Expression of church. We number around 12, and have been praying hard over the past few months - Celtic prayer cycles, prayer-walking, the BLESS prayer model etc. - asking for God's blessing on our area and for the release of the promised facilities that the Hallam Fields estate really needs. It has been encouraging to see some movement which we believe to be in response to our prayers.

We await the final decision about a Community Centre being built on the estate. Those involved in the process have hinted that the delay is for good reasons - so we are hoping the rejected first proposal means what is built will be better than we could imagine! But even if work starts soon, we cannot envisage having a place to meet for at least 12-18 months.

We are also awaiting a final decision about a proposed Primary School and Community Recreation area on the estate. All the local and regional politicians now support this option, as opposed to it being built off the estate across the main road. However the decision is taken elsewhere.

The promised pedestrian walkover over the busy dual carriageway is now going to be built and initial meetings have already taken place with the school in whose grounds it will 'land'.

Sharon and I are also finding invitations to be involved not only in the parish and the wider diocese, but also in local churches. Please pray for us as we undertake:

- Preaching in both churches and some invitations to preach elsewhere.
- Sharon being on the musicians' rota.
- Working with the Methodists on Messy Church and exploring a possible 'Messy Disciples' group for the adults.
- Developing and deepening community links, with Sharon having been invited to be a Community Governor at the local trust which oversees a secondary school and sixth form college

Looking further ahead,

- Stephen is going to help lead a 6 week discipleship course with the local Anglican parish partnership starting in October/November. This will be a creative exploration of the churches in Acts and reflection on how our expressions of church measure up to them.
- Stephen and the Vicar will lead an 'exploring faith' course beginning in October.
- We have been invited to lead a 'Quiet Day' at Launde Abbey - the diocesan retreat centre in 2016.

Sharon and I have been blessed by participation in diocesan training courses and several more are planned for the coming months - this is something we did not have in Franc, and it's great to have access to new ideas and other people's experiences. The diocese of Leicester is very forward-looking, and has intentionally created space, time and resources to supporting and developing pioneer ministries locally. To this end, it seems as though we are both going to be licensed as 'Pioneers' by the bishop in October at Leicester Cathedral. We have also decided that it is right for us to be confirmed into the Anglican Church and this will happen in November.

Our old lives seem very far away and radically different!! Yet happily our links with France remain active, with Father Yves, our friend and priest from Somberton, visiting us for two weeks in August. We will also welcome friends for holiday and the odd weekend, which is great, although we do miss the sunshine and wine of France! As we write this we have just had three fabulous days with Ben, Josh, Caleb and Caleb's girlfriend Carole with us. We have enjoyed showing them a few of the sights of Leicester - but mostly just being together, and practising speaking French again!

Stephen has published another book! 'Fuel for Pilgrims - Volume One' is a collection of 40 extended and developed meditations from his spiritual blog site (www.fuelforpilgrims.org). Each meditation has questions to explore and suggested prayer responses; they are all inspired by Stephen's happy hours spent in the more obscure corners of Christian literature! Volumes two and three will be follow shortly. Recently Stephen was inspired to create a running themed spiritual blog - www.runningwithgod.org - a kinetic exploration of faith. This is starting to generate some traffic, although it is still early days.

After a few months of looking around, Sharon has found a part-time job and will begin working for Leicestershire Adult Learning Services in September teaching English as a foreign language to adult learners.

Please pray for our friend David Bjork who undergoes brain surgery on 21st July. David has suffered for many years with a problem of excruciating facial pain, it is hoped this surgery will alleviate this.

With our thanks for your continuing prayers and support. God bless you all.

Stephen, Sharon, Ben, Josh, and Caleb

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