



## A Year Has Passed!

Dear friends,

Well, we recently celebrated a milestone - our first anniversary of being back in the UK and being employed in an Anglican parish to lead the development of a Fresh Expression of church. It has been a wild ride! Lots of new things to learn, lots of challenges, lot of encouragement, lots of unanswered questions - in short, normal life!

We give thanks to God for the signs of His Spirit beginning to move. Our NEARER community is now too large to comfortably meet in our home, so our Wednesday events have multiplied into a two-option format, with people choosing the activity they feel will most help them in their walk with God and their involvement in mission. This is a big move forward in creating space to welcome new members. It is also an act of faith that God will grow our community.

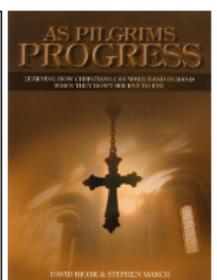
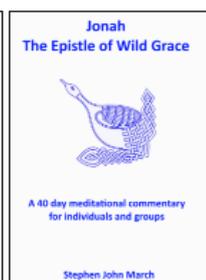
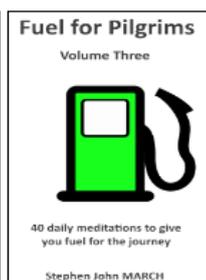
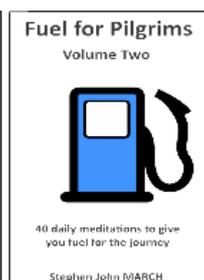
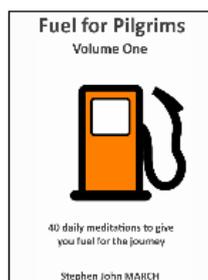
We have taken another step in our desire to connect with our community, running a Sacred Space stall at the local rugby club's B-Fest event. A storm caused chaos halfway through the day with the beer tent being blown away with three families inside it! Happily, there were no injuries. However in the time before the storm hit we were able to talk to people, have some meaningful conversations, invite people to NEARER events - "Church for people who don't like Church" is our new tag-line!



I did a 'Jesus Deck' interaction with a lady who started to cry as the story of Jesus connected with her life and she sensed God was calling her back to the church she had left as a child. I am really positive about the use of this resource as a means of sharing the gospel story in a non-threatening way.

The NEARER community needs to do more of this kind of thing, being present at community events, just offering loving service and opening up a space for God in those situations. But we also need to learn how to do it better, which is a challenge for us going forward.

All four of Stephen's books are now available FREE in their electronic formats for eBook readers (Kindle, Kobo, Nook etc.) and in epub format for tablets and PCs. There is a lot of positive feedback from the 'Fuel for Pilgrims' daily devotional series, which is encouraging and affirming. The books can be downloaded from the respective eReader vendor sites or from [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com).



Please pass this information on to anyone - churches/individuals/groups who may appreciate this FREE resource.

The book 'As Pilgrims Progress' that David BJORK and Stephen wrote together about cooperation in mission between Catholics and Evangelicals is now being translated into Spanish by a couple in the USA. They read the book and feel it would be a really valuable resource to have in the Spanish speaking world. Please pray for Christian and Solange as they kindly undertake this massive translation task for us.

One of the things we have been discovering in NEARER is that creativity is a really important way of helping people to engage with God. We are trying to make a conscious effort to provide opportunities for creation and for the exploration of art as an aid to spiritual meditation/learning within our events.

Stephen has been seeking to develop his own creative skills and has joined a local camera club. He was delighted to win the prize for the best image at the 'President's Evening' a few weeks ago.

Sharon's gospel choir is moving ahead, getting to know each other better, and learning some different songs. They are now available to sing at weddings at St James, and have 5 to do this year!! It's really good to see how people look forward to coming along and enjoy the evening. 4 new people have tried us out this session, and two come regularly. Sharon's involvement with school continues as she has more governors' training. The school has a new head, and one third of the staff will change over the summer. It's a great opportunity for us to support them and look forward to standards improving.



We are really pleased to be able to say that our boys are all doing well. We look forward to seeing them all, hopefully, over the summer. These once or twice a year moments when we get to meet with them are very precious to us. Those of you with far-flung children know the feeling I'm sure!

Ben has changed jobs and is loving his new post in a company called HAGAR which manufactures electrical switchgear. He says that if you have ever seen the TV series 'The I.T. Crowd', that is exactly what his job is like!

Joshua is still on track with his PhD. He is about to go to Munich to meet up with a psychology professor there to discuss his thesis. He will present his first paper at an international psychology conference this summer, and is also going to be on the panel at a psychology symposium - all of which are really good for his future career.

Caleb has passed his 'Gardien de la Paix' competitive entrance exams! He has now filled in all the forms to go off to undertake training to become the French equivalent of a police constable. This will be about a year-long training course at a military academy somewhere in France. He is just waiting to hear where and when this training is to start.

We do value your prayers and practical support very much. Hospitality and generosity are at the heart of all we are trying to do, but being with and providing for people does mean we are very tired sometimes, and we haven't always managed these busy times well. Please pray we would make some changes to this area of our ministry. Taking the 'long look' is not something we have had to do before, yet in the Anglican setting we find ourselves constantly having to think about things a season ahead. Sometimes this can rob us of our joy in the present - so please pray we would balance 'being prepared' with 'responding to things at the last minute'. The good Scots saying 'a hunger or a burst comes to mind!!'

One practical thing to pray for is for the provision of a new car. We LOVE our 17 year old sports car but she needs £700 worth of welding to keep her going. Another car, hopefully a bit younger and with 4 seats/doors would be really useful!

Thank you again for your faithful prayers and support which is the only reason we are still here, loving God and having fun being involved in His mission in the world. Be blessed, be a blessing!

**Stephen, Sharon, Ben, Josh, and Caleb MARCH**

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