



# Easter 2017



Dear friends,

Thank you for praying for us and for supporting us. We are now in the final year of the planned 3 year contract to work pioneering a new Christian community within the parish of Birstall & Wanlip. Time goes quickly!



We have much to be thankful for and a few things that we would appreciate your praying about.

We give thanks that 3 members of the NEARER community were licensed by the Bishop as Pioneers in February. Our new Bishop, Martyn SNOW, came to NEARER and did the licensing ceremony as part of our normal Wednesday session. These three have now all become part of the NEARER leadership team and are also seeking to discern what specific areas of ministry and outreach God might be calling them to

NEARER now has a space 'to be' in the community. A new care home has offered us space to meet as an interim solution while they have space and the community facilities on Hallam Fields are being built. This enables us to be a Christian presence within that space, which is fast becoming a community hub. We also hope that staff, residents and their families will feel able to join us as our profile their increases.

The new primary school being built on Hallam Fields is on schedule for opening in September and Sharon has been made Chair of Governors.

The other local primary schools, including the one where Sharon is Vice-Chair of Governors at present, had a recent OFSTED inspection – a very scary process for all concerned, but well worth the staff effort, as the results were very encouraging.

NEARER had our first day out! We visited the British Museum to do the 'The Stones Cry Out' Bible tour with Mark HENDLEY who we knew at theological college. It was fantastic day and tour, there were some fantastic moments as we saw objects that might possibly have been held by characters from the Bible! We highly recommend it for church groups - see [www.kingdomcollision.com](http://www.kingdomcollision.com).



There are a few initiatives that we would appreciate prayer for:

From Friday 26th May to Saturday 3rd June Churches Together in Birstall & Wanlip will be gathering to pray, asking for God's blessing upon our community and for people to come to know Jesus. We will gather from 1.0pm to 1.30pm daily at St Theresa's Roman Catholic Church and from 7.00pm to 7.30pm daily at Birstall Methodist Church. This is our response to a global prayer initiative launched by the Archbishop of Canterbury called 'Thy Kingdom Come'.

Following on from 'Thy Kingdom Come' NEARER will be doing a street prayer initiative in which we will visit every home in two of the streets on the Hallam Fields estate, asking people what



they need prayer for and offering to pray with/for them. Please pray that this is positively received and that it releases God's blessing upon many lives and homes.

On 25<sup>th</sup> April the Parish meet to decide whether or not to extend the funding for the Pioneer Community Worker post. If they decide to do so, the next step would be to look at where that funding might come from. Once funding is in place then there will need to be a discernment process (of which we would be a part) in order to be sure that we are the right people for this post and to clarify the specifics of the vision going forward.

As for us, we feel that at the moment we are where God wants us to be. Whether our future is here, or elsewhere, or here but doing something else, or doing something else part-time, we have no idea! Only God knows! Please pray that what God wants will become clear to all of us over the next weeks and months.

On 7<sup>th</sup> May we have been asked to help lead a training day for curates (trainee vicars) on the theme of Spirituality for Mission. Please pray that this will be a helpful day for everyone and lead to sustainable ministries.



On the down side of things we have been living with rats for the past few months – this has not been an easy cohabitation! It appears a drain manhole under the extension has collapsed and the rats are using this to get access under the floor and into the wall cavities etc. The builders are going to break through the kitchen floor while we are away for a few days starting 24<sup>th</sup> April. You might pray that the problem can be quickly fixed and the kitchen re-instated with a minimum of mess – AND NO MORE SCRATCHING!

### Family News:

Ben is still happy and enjoying working at Hager in their IT department at Strasbourg. He and his girlfriend Mélodie seem to be very happy. She is in the final stages of a Masters' degree, so working very hard. She will start a second Masters' next September! As they live about a 3-hour train ride away from each other, theirs is a long-distance romance, with all that goes with that. Over Easter they are travelling down to meet her parents, who live in the South of France. Please pray for them both that God would lead and guide them in their relationship, future studies, and work lives.

Joshua is in the final stages of his PhD – so climbing the final face of the mountain! He and Lindsay are also getting ready for their wedding in Inverness on 10<sup>th</sup> August. Joshua is also trying to find a job as a post-doctoral researcher. So he has quite a full plate! Please pray for him and Lindsay that God would help them and guide them through all of these things.

Caleb is now 3 months in to his training at Police Academy. It is tough but he is working hard and still enjoying it. It appears his best subject is shooting! Please pray for him as he has regular exams as well as practical and physical tests. He and Carole are finding it hard to be separated so much. Please pray for them both and for Carole as she thinks about what to do in terms of training next year.

Again our thanks and appreciation for your care and concern, prayer support and financial giving – they are all essential to our lives and ministry here. May God grant you a blessed Easter full of the joy and hope of Christ's glorious resurrection. Christ hanging on the cross has been allegorised in Christian tradition as a symbolic reinstatement of the fruit hanging on the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden – that eternal life which mankind forfeited by disobedience, is now offered again, a free gift won by Christ's sacrifice and accessible to all through repentance and faith. Be amazed!

Be blessed, be a blessing!

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

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