

Autumn 2018

Dear friends,

As we look out at autumn leaves blowing around, it is hard to remember being really too hot!! But we were, although we very much enjoyed the summer, with trips around and about to see various friends and family members.

Joshua's PhD Graduation:

It was lovely to attend Joshua's PhD graduation in Stirling in June. It was one of the hottest days of the year.....never thought we'd see Scotland looking sunburnt!!



Holiday in Normandy:

We thoroughly enjoyed our summer holiday – back in France in lovely weather! We managed to visit Mont St Michel, Lisieux, and even Camembert! We also got to watch France winning the world cup!

Ben a Home-Owner:

Our eldest Ben has just bought a flat in Strasbourg. He has not yet moved in, but has already been painting and decorating and will move in next weekend. He has invited the whole family to come and celebrate Christmas with him in his new home. It will be a little cramped, all of us in a two bedroom flat! But we are all really looking forward to it.



Caleb Fully Fledged:

Caleb has now nearly completed his year's probation with the Police in Lyon and soon hopes to be a fully-fledged 'Gardien de la Paix'. He and Carole will get married in a civil wedding the week after Easter 2019 and will have a religious ceremony the following year.

Stephen's Work in the Diocese:

Over the past few months Stephen has had the opportunity to meet with some of the top thinkers in the Fresh Expressions of Church (fxC) field. He met with Michael MOYNAGH when visiting St Alban's diocese to look at how they support pioneering and fxCs. More recently George LINGS stayed in our home and spent 48 hours talking fxC with us

and Stephen's colleagues. It was a helpful time for our department to reflect on how we supporting and developing fxCs within the diocese.

Stephen and his colleagues have also had the chance to share Leicester diocese's experiences and learning in this area with people from abroad who are just starting the fxC journey. The diocese has hosted groups from France, Germany, Wyoming, Florida, and Australia. In fact we will be sharing with a group of Germans who are visiting the diocese to explore fxCs on October 15th. In November a delegation of 14 pioneers from our sister diocese of Wyoming are visiting us for 10 days.

Stephen has also been busy trying to create networks of pioneers who will self-support through becoming 'Missional Learning Communities'. Two weeks ago saw the first meeting of the first group, a mixture of experienced and new pioneers and some clergy in a very rural part of the diocese.

Stephen has also been back in the pulpit! He got invited to share with two congregations about how the way that we do church is changing. We are moving to what has been termed the 'Mixed Ecology' - where fxCs and inherited congregations live together in a mutually beneficial way as part of the same parish.

Stephen has been able to accompany several people on their journey to licensing as Pioneer Ministers. Saturday 13th October will see them licensed by the Bishop at Leicester Cathedral.



Stephen will also be re-licensed himself as a Pioneer Minister working as a Pioneer Development Worker, supporting pioneering within the diocese.

So there is a lot to give thanks for in our Diocese, and we thank God for being able to work with praying people who have mission and discipleship on their hearts.

Probably our most important news is that we are moving on from Birstall and NEARER!

We have seen God answer prayer and give us clear direction for the next steps on our faith journey.

It's a long story.....at the end of 2017 we felt Sharon should think about giving up her job in Adult Education. This was tough – her job brought Sharon personal encouragement as she was able to see the difference that being able to speak English made to vulnerable people, and it also provided financial security for us given Stephen's contract is only until October 2019. However we felt it was God's leading, so in March she dropped to 2 days a week and then in June finished altogether... not knowing what was ahead, but trusting that God did.

A period of 'being becalmed' followed, with nothing much happening other than having a very tidy house and well-organised cupboards!!

But during all of this time we continued to wait for God to show us what was on the horizon. Part of the picture became clearer when Sharon was invited to work a few days each month with the Diocesan Head of Learning and Ministry. This role is to help deliver and assess Lay Training for Readers, Evangelists and Pastoral Assistants.

The Diocese is working on a new model this year where the groups meet once a month for a Sunday and then on-line once more before submitting assignments. Sharon is working closely with the Pastoral Assistants this year. There is a lot to learn in a short time, and the role is really challenging for her, in a good way!

Then in September the Diocese advertised a post we were very much interested in... a part-time Pioneer Minister role in a large rural area of 11 churches that are looked after by a small team of lay and ordained people.

We got very excited as we read about these small congregations (sometimes less than ten on a normal Sunday) who had taken the very brave decision not to advertise for another clergy person to run more services, but rather to think missionally.



This led them to decide to share their resources, to sacrifice their own agenda and to embrace the need for change. This led to a discernment process for them after which they decided, very courageously, to invest in pioneering by offering a house in exchange for 3 days work a week.

We decided to apply to share the post and are delighted to say that we were selected and so we will be moving to live in the south of Leicestershire to begin work there on November 1st.

Our new address is: The Rectory, 21 Dag Lane, North Kilworth, LE17 6HD.

It is a daunting task, and we are very aware of our own weakness. We are conscious that we will need God's leading and guiding every step of the way. We go praying that God will show us where He is at work, and help us see how we can join Him in what He is doing.

We are delighted to be joining a great team of very talented people. The Avon-Swift Benefice has only one full-time clergy, Emma, who is a gracious and gentle leader. Alongside her there are some trainee curates and lay ministers, all working together to help support the life of the 11 churches. The team has already been thinking of where the missional opportunities are; one key area to develop is with the 4 church schools in the Benefice, where there are good existing links and a willingness to do more.

So we will be living in a small village situated between Market Harborough and Lutterworth. It feels very familiar to us in many ways – a reminder of our years in France! No more gas, high-speed internet, good mobile phone signals, or take-away food for us!! But in exchange, we will be living in a small community, seeing fields and trees from the window and with miles of walks on the doorstep.....one of us is already talking about dogs!!

The next few months will be challenging, and we need your prayers more than ever. One consolation is that we don't need to change country this time around, but moving again after only 3 years is quite a lot to cope with, given that we will be starting a new job too! We remember the words of Psalm 92:14-15

*'They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming,
"The Lord is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.'*

May you, and we, know the truth of this verse and continue to bear fruit and staying fresh even as we get (just a little bit!) older.

Be blessed, be a blessing!

Stephen and Sharon MARCH

Email : marches@marchsite.com

www.lepaindespelerins.org

www.fuelforpilgrims.org

www.runningwithgod.org

www.marchsite.com

NEARER Resources - FxC Resources - <https://tinyurl.com/y7yf7gvm>