

News from Liz



Dear All at St Jo's

I have to admit that I feel like starting with this newsletter wishing you a Happy New Year, but it is already February and a bit late for that. I guess it's a sign of how quickly January seems to have been and gone!

How nice it was not to have snow to contend with over Christmas this year! When I hear myself say that, I know that I have truly become old - but it is sadly true. It made my travels up north so much more relaxed and it was once again great to make the most of being up there by seeing various precious friends and family.

I arrived back to my little flat on New Year's Eve, and revelled again in the gift of a home of my own – something I can just never cease to be grateful for.

A visit to Germany

Last week I flew out to visit dear friends Gerd and Rosi Bergmann and their family for 5 days. They are YWAMers, working normally in Chile and you may remember that I helped them start up a School of Grace in Chile a couple of years ago. Last year their youngest son was diagnosed with leukaemia and they have been back in their home country of Germany for 18 months now, while he underwent a bone marrow transplant. Mercifully and wonderfully this has been successful, so they are now planning their return to Chile for September this year. They invited me to visit them and help them think through the next stage of their ministry, and the next School of Grace that they plan to run in January next year. It was a privilege to be with them, and hear their testimony of God's grace in their lives, as well as listen to their heart for what He has called them to in Chile.



Trip to India

It looks like Val and I will be heading off to the north of India for about a week at the beginning of March, at the invitation of a small team of workers there. They have asked us to invest into their team life, and explore ways that they can themselves continue to grow and develop while serving in quite demanding conditions. Please do pray for us during this time!

Ongoing coaching

I cannot say enough what a privilege it is to accompany people on their spiritual journeys through life. Victor Hugo once wrote, "*There is one spectacle grander than the sea, that is the sky; there is one spectacle grander than the sky, that is the interior soul.*" How much I resonate with that, as I listen to individuals explore their interior lives, their souls – and discover more of who they are and more of who God is for them. Sometimes there is grieving to be done because of how God's image in me has been marred by sin; invariably there is the work of self-acceptance to be done – that I might learn to love myself in the light of God's great love for me; and wondrously, there is celebration to be made as I bear witness to Christ in me, the hope of glory. For the glory of God is surely seen in me being uniquely me, and offering to the world the gift that is uniquely mine to offer because of the expression of Christ that I uniquely am. Hmmm, there are a lot of uniques in that sentence – maybe because that's what God specialises in.

And finally...

I want to finish on a more personal note, with a word about my finances. Never an easy thing to raise, and I'm especially conscious of the times of economic challenges that we all live in right now, where just reading through Christmas updates, still fresh in my mind, gives me an acute reminder of redundancies, changes of circumstance and financial difficulties for many.

For 24 years now, I have lived "by faith" - that is without a regular salary provided by the agency that I work for. Instead I have trusted God to provide me with supporters who believe in what I do and want to contribute to enabling me to do what I do. It has been an extraordinary 24 years, with many, many stories of God's faithfulness and provision, which have without doubt deeply shaped my faith in a living God who acts in our world. It's a model that many missions' agencies have adopted through the centuries, but more than that, I guess for me it is also a lifestyle that I feel called to because of what I do, and I have known a grace to live with the inevitable uncertainty and questions that it comes with.

Over the last couple of years, I've been aware of a greater gap opening up between my monthly expenses and monthly committed income. I've done all I can to pare down expenses and then have felt God's invitation to trust Him to provide month by month what's missing. Which He has done in a way that even after all these years causes me to marvel. Month by month, something has come from somewhere! Many times through the unexpected giving of friends who feel a nudge to give. How grateful I am!

I'd like to share a little picture at this point of something that I experienced towards the end of last year. At the end of our October gathering, we invited a dear friend Barry to preside over communion for us. He blessed the bread and wine and then told us that instead of us passing it round, or us coming up to receive it, he wanted to bring it to us. He felt that this was to be a demonstration of how God Himself comes to us, not as a heavenly bellhop, always there at our beck and call, but as the God who knows our need and chooses to feed us with His choice of food in His timing. I know it's a very simple image but it has lodged itself in my heart and somehow become God's steadying word to me in the midst of the on-going 'unknown' with my finances.

Not long after that, I heard from one of my longest-standing supporters that due to change of circumstances they would need to drop their support by £50 a month. I think because of this picture, the news did not faze me and a faith remained in my heart that God knows my need. Alongside of this came a little nudge that it was time to share and ask people to pray with me. So here I am sharing. I have no idea how God would continue to provide for me. I can do the maths - 5 people giving £10 a month would really make a difference. But that feels like what I just said - me doing the maths—me working it out—when really I have no idea of what God has in His heart at this time. I know that I would like to ask you to pray with me, trust with me. And if by any chance you feel prompted to support me in any way, that would be great too.

Meanwhile a big thank you as always for your on-going interest and concern and prayers—I value it enormously.

With much love,

