

VERY LATE SPRING 2017



the Kings of England

(not for much longer)



In our last newsletter (which embarrassingly was the Christmas newsletter—how time flies!), we finished it off with this line ‘Until the whatever might happen happens, pray that we will be faithful in this little part of the world God has placed us.’ It was ending a paragraph expressing anticipation of what God might bring our way in 2017 and wanting to be faithful as it came. Well, what has happened is a powerful prompt to come home. It was not what we were expecting, but as we went through January and February, we increasingly started to think that we should be moving back to Canada. We prayed through February a prayer that has been meaningful in our past—are we called to stay or called to go? In the past situations in which we prayed this we were called to go, but this time we didn’t sense God was saying either. So, in the absence of clear direction, we have chosen to come home. Our reasoning is based on a combination of a sense of exhaustion here, and a desire to be closer to family. Since making the decision, we have felt sadness that our time is coming to an end, but also we have seen signs that God will bless this church family as we have had some outstanding worship times and prayer times. So, we will be home just before Christmas and will make some decisions then as to what we will do and where we will live. If you have any suggestions, please don’t hesitate to send them our way; our ears are wide open to the voice of God.

Foundations Laid

When we first came to our church, they asked Stan to articulate the vision of the church. Stan spent the first 6 months we were here listening and praying through where was God calling this church. This vision statement came out of that process — *we seek to be a loving family, devoted to the Father, transformed by the Spirit and graciously drawing others to Christ.* During the past 6-8 months, the church leadership has been going through a process building on the vision. Last autumn, we clarified the church’s current purpose and identified our core values. These were presented to the church and this year began with us preaching through the values. Subsequently, after getting a lot of feedback from the church family, we identified the important challenges facing the church and from that goals were set out. We are now working with 5 teams to identify specific plans for how we can pursue these goals. This foundation will serve them well as they move forward in calling a new pastor.

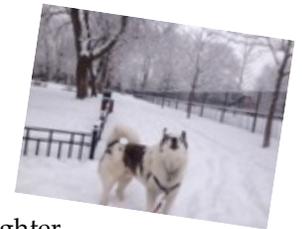


Looking Forward to the next 7 months

- We are excited about officiating a recommitment of vows by a dear friend and her husband. Julie came to Christ while we were at Quiet Waters in East Anglia and she has asked Stan to play a part in the recommitment of her vows to her formerly estranged husband. It is a beautiful, inspiring story of God’s redemptive grace.
- In July, we will go to Cape Breton Bible Camp to speak at the camp that Ashley and Pete serve at and visit Ashley and Pete and the boys for a few days. As an added bonus, Stan’s sister Carolyn and her husband Bob are driving up from Phoenix Arizona to spend a few days with us there.
- In August, we will take a group of youth from our church and community up to Soul Survivor, a massive youth conference led by Mike Pilavachi and Matt Redman. It will stretch us out of our theological (ie. charismatic) and physical (ie. tenting) comfort zone, but we are looking forward to it.
- In the autumn, we will begin to implement the plans that have been prayerfully laid out for the church family.
- At all times, we will strive to finish well. As a friend said ‘we want to thrive, not just survive’. Pray that we do.
- At some point, God will tell us what’s next. Pray that we hear His voice.



- As our youth worker has been on maternity leave, we've been filling in with the youth. It has been rejuvenating, as youth have so much potential and energy. Their unbridled sense of humour has made us laugh harder than we've laughed for years. Our youth group has been small, so we have focused on events that we would hope would draw others. We haven't seen new youth come yet, but we hope we will before we leave. Stan reduced his speaking on Sunday mornings so that he can teach the youth class twice a month.
- The reduction of Stan's speaking (it's been more than 80% the last two years) has created room for some others to preach. Stan has enjoyed the opportunity to coach these people in how they might best speak from the word of God. It is good for the church family to hear voices from other backgrounds (occupational therapist, town planner, retired banker, marketing expert, IT manager, solicitor) make application of biblical principles.
- We had a five-day window open up in February and so we went to Montreal to see our son Matt and his wife, Blythe. We hadn't seen Matt and Blythe since last August, and we were not anticipating seeing them until next Christmas, so this was an unexpected gift. They are both studying in Montreal this school year, so we wanted to see their situation there. It was a good visit with lots of time to talk and walk together. In the week we were there we saw more snow than we had seen for three years. It was amazing! Matt and Blythe have great stories of God's provision for them over this year in Montreal; it was encouraging to hear them credit His goodness.
- In April we went to back to Edmonton to see Jeff and Ruth, and their six children, and our daughter Stephanie. However, we were blessed with an additional opportunity to see Ashley and Peter and their boys. The Stenstroms were out west visiting supporters for their work in Nova Scotia with One Hope Canada. It was wonderful to have all 9 of our grandchildren under one roof for a few days. While in Alberta, we spent some time in Three Hills doing some repair on our home there. Our tenants had moved out, and as we have not found new tenants, we are trying to sell the house. We have been unsuccessful to date, and we would appreciate your prayers in this regard. If the house is not sold by the time we return to Canada, it may dictate where we initially settle; which of course begs the question as to what type of work is available there.
- A very hospitable, adventurous family has recently joined our church family. They live a few miles outside of Sevenoaks and have developed their country estate to host large groups of people with ziplines, forts and fields. They invited our church family to go out for the weekend to camp. It was a special time of community and people connecting outside of the rush of a Sunday morning.



- Becky and two other ladies lead the children's ministry at our church. The children's ministry has exploded with kids. Recently, Becky went to a one-day conference in Brighton with one of her co-leaders. They had a good time together, but the highlight was when this lady prayed over Becky and gave her Isaiah 58:11 as a verse of encouragement. The thought that God was going to provide us renewal in a 'sun-scorched land' gave us dreams of Phoenix, our favourite holiday destination. 'Oh Lord, let it be so!'
- We've had two baptisms over the past 6 months. One lady had come to Christ only recently. She shared her story of domestic violence and God's healing mercy in a beautiful story of grace. Another lady who has grown up in the church and had a wayward youth also stepped forward to be baptised and gave God all the credit for resolving her anger and changing her heart. Both ladies have suffered unexplainable health challenges since they were baptised, the first being severe headaches and the second painful stomachaches. Please pray for them.
- We have been pleased to have two Canadian couples visit us in the past month. Richard and Diane came in mid- May and we headed up to Scotland during Becky's holiday from school. We stayed in Glasgow, but travelled throughout the lush highlands seeing Glencoe, Fort William, Loch Ness and Pitlochry, as well as going to Edinburgh for a day. This past week we have had Nels and Eleanor with us from Vancouver. We have stayed close to home as we've had to work, but we've taken time each day to go and hike, sometimes as much as 8 miles, in different places throughout Kent, appropriately called the garden of England. We love to have good friends come and visit us. It is a source of great encouragement and companionship.
- We had a couple over for supper recently and as we usually do, we asked the children if they would like to say a prayer. The little 3-year-old chap prayed the usual nonsensical prayer of a little gaffer, followed by a prayer from his sister that brought tears to our eyes. The sweet little 5 year old prayed in a soft whisper 'speak Lord, I am listening'. Three days later Stan was to speak on Moses' debate with God about going to save the Israelites and the call for all of us to quit arguing and just say 'speak Lord, I am listening'.

