

WHAT YOU'RE
DOING IS CRAZY...

BUT...



Seaford
June 2018

Back in June last year when news of our move to Edinburgh was first made known, we were and still are being met with all sorts of responses and reactions.

After over 40 years in the same house, it is not surprising that it was a shock to many! Ranging from "What you are doing is crazy" to "What an adventure" and "We'll miss you but we know it is right".

We have been so encouraged by what friends, family and even complete strangers have said to us both, and the care and concern too. Such a surprising move for us at this time in our lives, away from friends, family and the church we have been privileged to be a part of, rightly raised questions and concerns lovingly expressed.

In a sense we feel we need to offer an explanation about how we made this decision. It is for us a long and wonderful story of the beginning of a new and unexpected chapter in our lives.

A friend of ours from the photographic society we belong to said "If that is your calling - you've got to go!"

If you were to ask me (Chris) to explain, I could do so - and I can take hours!! But I (we) am so amazed at the detail and findings of how we have been "called".

This little booklet is written in an attempt to explain and 'unpack' our journey, and also as an encouragement that God speaks to ordinary people like us, however old or young we are, and however we may have messed up and made mistakes along the way.

At least putting it in a booklet means you can put it down when you have had enough - rather than listen to me drone on for hours!

So we are confident that our future is secure in God's hands, through everything, realising there may be sadnesses and disappointments, but also God's presence and blessing - which we pray will overflow to many.

With much love
Chris and Jim

The Beginning of the Future

Near the beginning of 2013 we started thinking seriously about our future.

Should we "downsize"? All sorts of questions came to mind.

The process developed as we thought about what the options might be.

What shape would our finances be in?

What sort of home would be best for us as we grew older?

We had seen very good friends make moves, and also some who left moving too late in their lives, causing difficulties and sadnesses as they were no longer able to cope.

However, it was not in our minds to retire gracefully - because we were always convinced that there remained "things to do".

When we were at a conference in 1997, a friend, Jeff Kidwell prayed for us - and spoke very directly to us that the Christian life was a long-distance race and that we must keep running until we cross the finishing line. That impacted us at the time and has lived with us ever since - even through our darkest hours.

We began considering, and praying, and talking to each other about where this future should be, what options there were, what considerations we must take into account, and over-arching all of

this was “What is God’s plan for us?”.

We each made lists of things that came to mind and then compared them. Chris ended up starting a “Mind Map” – well he would, wouldn’t he? That started with just a few notes and has developed over the years. If you are of the geeky sort, – you can see it at the end of this booklet!

In order to discover this future we noted that we needed:-

- Leading and guidance
- To seek God for *His* thoughts
- To have a conviction that these plans were right
- The advice and counsel of family, friends and leaders in the church
- To consider the circumstances
- Know what financial resources we would have available if we sold our home
 - What our needs would be
 - The costs of moving and of ‘living’ etc

Lists

We made lists – and let our minds and imaginations run wild, deciding we wouldn’t rule anything out.

When we were thinking of *where* we might live, we included some silly, fantasy places – so the list included Barbados, Cornwall, France – although not with much serious intent, other than we didn’t want to rule out something which actually God might want for us!

More realistically perhaps, as the list grew places like Seaford, Eastbourne, Littlehampton, Newhaven, Edinburgh, Sheringham, Cromer, Inverness, and Wales were added, along with Bexhill.

If it came into our mind, we put it down, however silly it might have seemed. We didn’t want to miss ‘God ideas’.

Inactivity?

Not really, but although we talked about these plans, nothing really developed until February and March 2016.

Chris was on the staff at Kings Church in Eastbourne and Seaford for ten years, and became unwell with a debilitating cough, lost his voice, and was generally “laid low” for some five weeks.

We were thrilled to be a part of this great church, but also we were aware that we were *doing* a lot of things, but feeling that they may not have been the best things, however much appreciated by others.

You could say we were *doing* a lot, but were uncomfortable and felt we needed to *be* what God wanted us to be rather than do a lot of things.

So, it came about that we felt it would be right to take a 'sabbatical', to seek God and His plans, also to visit other churches to learn from them. We particularly wanted to see how they made people feel welcome, and at home. God has given us a passion to want to welcome people into church, people who have never been before, people who would feel out of place, unwelcome, unworthy or guilty. From Anglican cathedrals, to very small fellowships, through a number of churches from our own 'family' of churches, we learned some good lessons. In one or two places we also learned how NOT to do it! We have to say the Anglican churches we visited were brilliant at it.

When Chris told Jez Field, the elder with whom he worked in the church, he was immediately excited about a great adventure God was leading us on, and after about a second the realisation broke that our Great Adventure was going to affect him rather a lot – as we would not be around to stand alongside him in leadership in Seaford.

The Sabbatical

Starting at the beginning of September 2016, with a five week holiday in our motorhome, it was due to last until the end of February.

A Bit of Background

- A few decades ago, Chris had a dream about living in a tall building in Newhaven where there were lots of other people. (Newhaven is a town about 3 miles from our Seaford home.)
- When we first thought of moving, Jill searched on a property internet site for 'Newhaven'. To her surprise the first property that was shown was in Newhaven, Edinburgh.
- In August 2013 we had been at a conference where we heard Matthew Clifton-Brown speak briefly about Kings Church Edinburgh and the age distribution of its members which was heavily weighted towards the young. He expressed a view that he would like some older, experienced people to join.

What follows may seem a little strange to you unless you are familiar with the bible records of the church in its early years. It records as a matter of fact that God spoke to people in the church through ordinary church 'members' but by way of a supernatural gift, which was called prophecy. This may seem weird and/or dangerous, but it was the early church's common experience. The things said as prophecy were set around with safeguards to stop people going off track, and just building their lives on such words.

Our experience as we sat in churches where we were not known

at all, as well as where we were, was quite remarkable. God spoke to us with a consistent message through preaching and prophecies at nearly every place we visited.

A Chronology

Sunday 1 October 2016 – Shrewsbury

From the 'preach': "Step out.....take a step of faith into what God has for you".

Saturday 22 October 2016 – Darlington

Churches that Change Communities conference.

We both felt we should respond to a prophetic word from Martin Charlesworth which said; "Some people are here and there's a new phase coming up and you need faith for that new phase. You're launching into something new, or you feel called to something which hasn't happened yet, and if there's people here today then I'm speaking to you very, very, personally and saying this is your moment to respond".

Sunday 23 October 2016 – Darlington morning meeting.

A specific prophetic word brought personally to the two of us that we were pivotal people in God's plan which seemed to be speaking about a door and people coming in through us.

A Bit more Background

- In the autumn of 2002 we were privileged to be at a weekend where Bill Prankard spoke.
- He commented that when people were saying good bye they would often say 'Take care' – particularly English people. He challenged this, saying that it was more appropriate for Christians to say 'Take risks' This has stayed with us over the years.

Sunday 13 November 2016 – Brighton morning meeting

An amazing preach from Stephen Dawson on Risk, Investment and Doubt based on Jeremiah 32:6. Virtually every sentence seemed to be particularly relevant to us - Speaking of taking Godly risks - Promises empower us to take risks for the sake of Christ.

Thursday 1 December 2016 – Brighton

Following the funeral of a friend.

As we talked with Joel Virgo who we have known for a very long time – he was asking what was happening with us. As we explained, he immediately asked if we would consider going to Berlin to join Neville Jones at Mosaic Church in Berlin, as they needed what we ending up describing as 'Old Gits' (Chris's terminology) – people who had been in church for a while and had a bit of experience. Chris's immediate, private, reaction was 'I don't like Berlin' and when talking with Jill said 'I don't want to die in Berlin!'. Nevertheless we also felt a real 'check' that we shouldn't simply dismiss the suggestion.

Sunday January 8 2017 – Sheringham morning meeting

We were visiting Sheringham, Norfolk, which was a place we had thought might be our new home. Never having met the people there we found the welcome to be so genuine and warm. As they asked us about what we were doing in Sheringham they were so supportive and several people immediately wanted to pray for us that we would know God's perfect plan for us, and also expressing their wish that it might be in Sheringham! We felt very at home, and it was almost like being in Seaford. We felt very comfortable there.

Sunday 15 January 2017 – Seaford meeting

It was a deliberate decision on our part not to make a practice of 'visiting' our home church in Seaford whilst on this sabbatical, but on this Sunday we did. When we arrived, Jez Field didn't quite offer his normal very enthusiastic welcome. It was noticeable as we were very close and had been friends and partnered together for several years. Whilst he and the rest of the elders had been wholehearted in their support for us and their desire that we should hear from God, they were quite clear that their wish was that we should stay in Seaford and be part of the leadership there. As Jez unfolded his preach it became clear why he appeared a bit distant in his greetings.

Some bullet points from his message on 'The Calling of Abraham'.

- 'God dislodges a man – he upsets their world and moves them on'

Genesis 12:1 :-

- 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land I will show you' .
- 'Get up – leave'.
- 'We're not here to settle'.
- Genesis 12:4 – 'And Abraham went as the Lord told him'.

It would be fair to say that by that Sunday morning, not having had clear direction, we were missing our church family, and were considering whether we should settle back into Seaford.

Talking with Jez over coffee after the meeting:-

Jez 'Well what do you think of that?'

Chris '**No**, what did *you* think of that'

Jez 'When I was preparing this word I was thinking "I do hope Chris and Jill won't be there" '.

Later on that afternoon, as Chris was walking up the stairs at home having a silent conversation with God. In his arrogance he said 'Well if I'm the best you've got – I'll go'. Immediately the reply was 'You're not the best I've got but I've asked you to go'. For Chris in that 1 or 2 seconds he was absolutely and totally convinced that we had to go and leave Seaford.

Tuesday 17 January 2017 – Skype conversation with Neville Jones of Mosaic Church, Berlin

The possibility of going to Berlin was the reason for the call, but it was so very much more than that. Although Neville didn't know us – he had probably never spoken to us before – his pastoral concern for us – in this decision-making process was amazing. His practical, caring, straight-talking counsel significantly affected the rest of this journey. His counsel was to be ruthless in 1. Going back to the original call. 2. Ask – Is this a new season? 3. Ask is this a new place? He could not have been more helpful.

Thursday 26 January to Monday 30 January 2017 – Edinburgh

We had planned this visit to Edinburgh some while previously as part of our 'spying things out' and following up on what we had heard in 2013. We briefly checked out some neighbourhoods, including Newhaven which we liked a lot! Also museums and Kings Church. Matthew Clifton-Brown directed us to the property centre which showcases virtually all of the properties for sale in and around Edinburgh. It was something of an initiation into the completely different Scottish property system.

January to February 2017 – Discussions with church leaders and friends

Most of the church leaders expressed their strong personal wishes that we should stay and were suggesting various ideas and roles they would like us to fulfil, some of which we would have relished. We appreciated their time and care, and their care

too not to impose their wishes on us, and wanting us to hear clearly from God.

We particularly appreciated the time and care given to us by Clive Cernik, who knows us very well. He was able to help us understand about Norfolk from his involvement with a church in Norwich. He also knew Matthew Clifton-Brown well from Matthew's time in church leadership in Newcastle, and his own in Darlington. His insights and gentle counsel and encouragement have been so helpful.

March to May 2017 – Seaford

Not a great deal seemed to happen! We returned to the Seaford church, with the tension of wanting to play a part but knowing that we would be leaving.

Sunday 28 May 2017 – Seaford

Chris was sitting in the living room before going to the Sunday meeting, and simply said to God: – 'This has been going on a while, it would be really good to know something today!' .He didn't tell Jill about that.

Jill was getting ready to go the meeting and she said almost exactly the same thing to God as she walked across the landing. She didn't tell Chris.

Chris turned up at the school where the church meets. As they were getting ready for the morning a good friend, Ross Pavey,

spoke to Chris.

Ross - 'Every time I see you this morning, one word comes in to my head – shall I tell you what it is?'

Chris – 'Yes!'

Ross – 'It is 'Edinburgh!'

Chris – 'What?!!!'

Chris was of course absolutely amazed – but then also began to question, and asked what Ross knew of the possibility of us going to Edinburgh. He said he knew nothing other than some months before we had gone to Edinburgh but merely thought that was a holiday break.

Preaching at Seaford that Sunday morning was Wendy Stevens, who is based at Kings Church in Eastbourne. She had probably only ever spoken twice in Seaford previously. We had been sitting with her and afterwards asked if she could pray with and for us. She said she believed God was speaking to us about 'the new house/tent where you go'.

When we talked to each other about the morning's events, we found that we were both completely convinced that God had definitively spoken.

Having told our church leaders, family and friends we put our home on the market. That itself is another story which has taken another year. This seeming 'delay', and some serious medical

issues in our immediate family, caused some of our many friends who wanted us to stay to wonder whether it meant we should stay in Seaford. However, we could not get away from the conviction that God had spoken.

Friends and family

It is hard to express what the wholehearted encouragement and support from our children Neil and Kim has meant to us – as well as their wisdom and caring questions.

We have great friends and neighbours – many of them nothing to do with 'church' – their support too, has been amazing! As they have listened to our story and seen it unfold there has been no hint of cynicism or doubt about the validity of what we have said. A friend in our photographic society said – 'If that is the calling you've **got** to go!'

Particularly significant was a conversation with a friend of over 40 years in November 2016. He had been firm in his expression of his view that he wanted us to stay. However, over coffee he said to Chris 'I don't want you to take this the wrong way – but I think you should go'. He saw God's hand in this.

The Future

This whole sequence of events is not so much about moving –

that is not the goal to be achieved, rather it is the door to, what we believe, God wants to do in our lives and others.

In the week this was written, a good friend of ours, Stephanie Smith died, having had cancer for a few months. Her husband, Don, who started the Kings churches in Hastings and Eastbourne, rang Chris on 27 April – just over a month ago and said:-

‘As if I haven’t enough to worry about – God has put **you** on my heart for the last couple of days’...

‘What you are doing is crazy!
BUT it is crazy in God’

The verses God had given him were Jeremiah 31: 12-14

He went on to say that this move was to be for us a new era of blessing in a place where the Holy Spirit is ‘flowing’ and He will flow in us in a way we have not known before.

SO THAT IS WHY WE ARE GOING!!!!

By the way, we have had an offer accepted to purchase a flat in Newhaven, Leith - Edinburgh!

We hope you find this interesting. I know some of you will think

this is way beyond your experience and understanding of life and church. We want to say that we believe God has been speaking to us, based on a very real relationship with Him. We also want to affirm that he wants to have a relationship with everyone who reads this. This only came about for us because long before he called us to Edinburgh, he called us to experience his love and forgiveness, because of Jesus.

THANK YOU FOR READING THIS!

