

2015 - Life on Hold

The biggest event of 2014 arrived too late for last year's newsletter. The week before Christmas, Heather (Ben's wife) was called into hospital following a blood test that showed severe anaemia, requiring a blood transfusion. This was followed by a scan that revealed bowel cancer with spread to the liver.

She had been complaining of various symptoms for some time but had been given a series of mis-diagnoses ranging from a floating rib to piles. We can only surmise that bowel cancer was overlooked because of her youth, and other symptoms were misinterpreted as she had given birth only 9 months earlier. Whatever the explanation, the diagnosis they were given was that the liver tumours were inoperable (ie. terminal) and all she could be given was palliative care (ie. chemotherapy) to prolong life.

Naturally we've put pretty much everything on hold since then, so we can be available to help out when and where needed with the grandchildren. This has been tiring but rewarding. Adia is now 3½ and Heath is 20 months, so they've not really been able to appreciate what has been going on, but seem to take things in their stride. This is normal life to them, and Heather has been at home most of the time.

She's a very determined person with a strong faith and the support of a great church family and has received an enormous amount of prayer and support over the last 12 months. She was able to endure almost constant chemotherapy for 9 months, which saw the liver tumours shrink remarkably, and in September she was told that the surgeons might be able to operate, though they were at great pains to point out all the risks! Considering where she was last January this was miraculous news.

Fast forward to the middle of November, and Heather went into Aintree hospital for liver surgery and we moved into their house to look after the children. It proved to be more complicated than they had anticipated, but the surgeons were able to complete the task 10½ hours later, breaking a few hospital records in the process. However, 70% of the liver had to be removed and they were worried that it might go into failure. But after a tense few days they could see the readings start to improve and Heather started to recover.

Much to everyone's delight she came home on Dec 4 and is now convalescing. Lynne and I are now back home, but having trouble getting used to our old bed again ☹, having experienced the acres of extra space afforded by a king-sized model!

The next hurdle will come in the New Year when Heather will have to go back to hospital to have the bowel tumour removed. This should be a much simpler job, if you can call any surgery simple, but will still be a big trauma to her body. Nevertheless, we have faith that all will be well, and are looking forward to a better year in 2016.

Ben has been able to continue with his PhD thanks to the support of the University. They have been very understanding and have given him blocks of leave and reduced his hours to allow him to care for Heather and the children. He has made good progress and if all goes well he should be finishing in the next 6 months.

In other news...

Susie & Liam's wedding in May is approaching alarmingly fast, and I'm beginning to think I ought to be making outline notes for my speech. Not content with planning a wedding they also moved house last summer - still in Sheffield but a bit nearer to Susie's work.

Peter & Emily had a great time on their grand tour of Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam etc., riding on elephants, sailing down rivers, and negotiating border crossings. They went back to Eurocamp again for the season and were based in Brittany this time. Peter secured a job as a trainer this time and Emily was doing admin in the office and on Reception. He enjoyed the work, but Emily's job was made the more difficult by an ineffective camp manager. Fortunately, towards the end of the season the manager was replaced and things looked up.

Since coming back they've been off to Poland for a fortnight helping on a course for Polish people wanting to improve their conversational English. Then after Christmas they're going to Hamburg to work on a monastery renovation for a few weeks. It's unpaid, but they get their board and lodging provided, and it's all experience!

Back in Southport, Lynne's Mum continues to be settled in the care home, but sadly in March her father passed away after a short illness. It was more of a rapid deterioration really, he just wore out. It wasn't a great surprise as he was 93 and very frail, but it's still a shock when it happens.

Ian is still working for Fish.Net, but managing to do 3-4 days a week working from home this year (isn't technology wonderful).

And with that, I think it's time to wind up and wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

With Love,

Ian & Lynne & the Family

Adia & Heath

