

burning even
brighter





Christmas 2016

SEASON'S GREETINGS

Thank you for all your support this year

Dear Prayer Partner,

Surprise, surprise!

Life delivers all kinds of surprises and in recent months on the national and world stage, Brexit and the advent of Mr Trump, certainly caused an intake of breath.

The element of surprise is embedded in the Christmas story; a surprised inn-keeper, surprised shepherds, surprised wise men, and of course surprised parents. Surprised children are always a delight to behold and at Christmastime, come into their own. The guesswork around those curiously shaped parcels, resting under the Christmas tree, suddenly release their hidden treasures. Eyes light up and shrieks of surprised delight.

Familiarity dulls surprise of course, and the older we become, our fascination with the festive season can become wearied, often accentuated with stress and pressure, and sometimes sensitively poignant because of absent friends and partners.

Nearly 2000 years ago, God took the world by surprise, and in this 21st Century, he wants to do the same.

Thank you for all your support and prayer in 2016. The year has flown by, but as I reflect on what has been accomplished, I am deeply encouraged. Why?

- 1) The **Academy** initiative has been very successful, and I guess the ultimate accolade was for us to be approached as the preferred partners with the Local Authority, to design and staff the new build school in Langley, Oldbury. We opened in September, and I assumed the role of Chair of Governors, having spent a lot of time recruiting suitable and appropriate colleagues for the Board.

The school, with an ethos based on traditional Christian values, has been highly commended by a School's Inspector (rather similar to Ofsted), and our first intake of Year 7 students seem very happy. They love the new building. My role in both Academies is an honorary one, and I am grateful that Flame is able to support what I do. Already this term, I have found myself engaged in conversation and discussion about Christian values and behaviour, and dare I say it – even with the blatant secularisation of our society – this has generated an inquisitive spirit as to the role of 'spirituality'. 'Bring it on' is my response to new opportunity.

- 2) At last, the **Peace Garden** is being built. Through your kind gifts, supplemented by a very generous donation from Q3, an appropriate space for reflection and celebration is being constructed. Earlier this year, one of our students was tragically killed in a car accident on a zebra crossing, and we found ourselves involved in counselling and drawing alongside family, friends and students. Again I recognise the importance of 'being there' in times of great need, and being able to draw alongside those who were deeply moved and upset. That will be an important function of this new space that we are creating in the grounds of the Great Barr Academy.
- 3) **Ministry** opportunity has been wide and varied. I am choosing more carefully which engagements to put into the diary, but have seen remarkable God-incidents emanating from teaching and sharing. I particularly enjoyed being with local fellowships who want to do church differently in order to impact the community, and opportunity to share my experience has been growing.

So What About 2017?

You will remember my sharing about some of the involvement with overseas projects – not essentially 'owned' by Flame, but initiatives where sponsors, governing authorities and management, have asked for help and assistance in building vision and strategy for the future.

I shall be returning to **Sparrows** in Johannesburg in January, and I also hope to visit **Rainbow House** in Thailand – the Home for Children with Disabilities – a little later in the Spring. Students and staff from Q3 were there in October and had a life-changing experience. These visits are now firmly embedded in the Q3 diary as we go forward.



I shall be continuing my work with the Academies, but primarily with the new facility in Langley. The Head of School is a great guy, but is under some personal pressure, as his wife was diagnosed with breast cancer one week before we opened. She has an operation diared for 17th February, so please pray.

And while on the subject of prayer, do visit the **Prayer Support** area on our website. This is where you will find specific prayer needs and it will be updated at least every month. And just a reminder that if you want the wider Flame family to pray for specific areas of need in and around you, please do contact Jackie in the first instance and she will transfer the information to the website (the page is password protected).

Breaking News

After many years of visiting Bournemouth for our Autumn retreat, **TIMEOUT** is moving to Paignton in Devon, for its October retreat, and it is going to be updated and refreshed in its style, programme and format.



THE REDCLIFFE HOTEL (*left*), which has received wonderful reviews, opens its doors to us from 23rd to 27th October. Situated on the beach (*see images, above right*), it affords wonderful sea views and traditional hospitality and it is easy for travel, with new road infrastructure close to Paignton. Exeter Airport serves those travelling from Scotland and Ireland.

Our guest speaker will be the Rev David Coffey (*right*) – former Baptist Union President and well-loved speaker, supported with other guests and activities. We will advertise this event as a Flame prayer partners event, that incorporates TIMEOUT.



Visit www.flametrust.org for the latest news and event updates



Some impressions of The Redcliffe Hotel and Paignton, which await us for Time Out 2017

And Some Sad News

Many of you will remember **Peter Jackson** – the pianist with a visual impairment. I knew him well in my student days, and often became his driver as Peter played and ministered at meetings and crusades across the country. He later joined me in my ministry with MWE – the Movement for World Evangelisation.

A few weeks ago Peter was called home, and suddenly I remembered something he had said to me way back in my student days. 'Dave', he said, 'I'm looking forward to the day when I die'. I must have sounded perplexed, because he quickly added, 'But Dave, I've never seen the face of my wife, my children or my friends, and yet the first face I shall see, will be that of Jesus'. I must admit to fighting back tears as this came immediately to mind on hearing of Peter's death. 'No more dying there ... he has gone to SEE the King'.

Snippets

- Friends and family continue to encourage me. My brothers are as busy as ever – heavily involved in infrastructure and systems that support the travel industry. Calin works behind the scenes on practical detail and is also developing links with some orphanages in Romania.

- From time to time, I enjoy writing, and after speaking in Birmingham at the Probus Club in November, I was encouraged by a friend to write down something of my life story. I'm thinking of writing on the experience of heading towards maturity, without losing vision and enthusiasm. We shall see, but I may therefore take some time out in January to be still, listen and assess whether this is something I should be doing. All comments gratefully received.
- St James House is currently on the market, so if a buyer emerges, we could be without a base. We will keep you updated if we have to find a new home.
- Sir Cliff is so grateful for the support and prayers of Christians, and as you know, he has been exonerated from the preposterous accusations made against him. I have encouraged him to pursue his grievance as I believe it comes within what we should all do for the sake of 'justice and righteousness'. I have said many times, 'that there but for the grace of God go you or I'. I admire his courage in the face of those ghastly accusations and am so proud that he made a public statement to the effect that it was his faith that brought him through. (I think he has actually increased his popularity as a result of his fortitude and resilience, so if you intend to get tickets for his tour in country locations next year, you might need to put your skates on).

Surprise, surprise – I think I had better draw this to a conclusion. May God take you by surprise this Christmastime as you reflect on how He incomprehensibly became a person in order to communicate His love for you. Make room for Him in all of the festivities, and enjoy His presence.

With every blessing for Christmas and the New Year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dave', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Dave



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For to us a child is born,
to us a Son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and for ever.
The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this.

Isaiah 9: 6-7 (NIV-UK)



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