



Flame Trust

- education
- supporting disadvantaged people and the voiceless
- local and worldwide community involvement
- mentoring and social development in a variety of cultures and situations
- tours and events bringing insight and challenge to audiences in the UK and overseas

News & Prayer Update - March 2016

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Dear Prayer Partner,

END OF AN ERA

Friday 29th January was a significant day at the Landrover Plant in Solihull as the very last 'Defender' vehicle rolled off the production line. Some said 'the end of an era', and I have to confess a slight sense of sadness in my spirit as some years ago – on the Trailblazers project in my Saltmine years – we owned a Landrover Defender and travelled far and wide. I particularly remember a trip to visit missionaries working with Arab World Ministries in Morocco, and my good colleague on that trip – Matthew Knight – spent great delight in negotiating mountainous terrain and shallow river beds in that vehicle. Not the most comfortable, but certainly 100% reliable and trustworthy.

It struck me again just the other day that as we get older, we have to cope with ends of eras. I have written extensively on change in the past – our changing world and living in a changing culture – and the more we are able to embrace change, the easier life becomes. For the believer, change is facilitated by a commitment to that which will never change. God's Truth is always constant, and He never changes. There is an anchor that holds when the tides change and the stormy winds blow.

SADNESS AND LOSS

Of course there are some changes that can have a very big impact on our lives, and nothing is more devastating than the loss of a loved one. On 28th December, Grace Payne, good friend and co-sponsor of Q3, was called home after a long illness. She will be sorely missed by Eric and indeed by us all, and on 20th February, we held a thanksgiving service at Q3 Academy to honour her life and work. Advancing years also means that we lose friends

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and family and several prayer partners have lost loved ones in recent weeks. My prayers and thoughts are with you all because it is a tough road to walk.

Similarly, the onset of illness can force change and there are several members of the Flame support team who are currently fighting illness – including one of our Board members, dear Mike Smith, who has always been a tower of strength and source of wisdom to me personally. Do remember him and Ros in your prayers.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ACADEMY

Q3 has been wonderfully successful and, under the hand of God, has achieved great educational results as well as impacting the community. As I have shared in my recent news bulletins, we are now building a new Academy in Langley – just 8 miles away from Q3 – and the good news is that this building is on course to open in September with the arrival of Year 7.



Already it is oversubscribed, and it will be a school of Christian character as is Q3 (not a faith school) and will deliver secondary education. As I write, another school has applied to join the Q3 family (Multi-Academy Trust to use the legal jargon), so it seems that we are about to grow.

There has been a false assumption that I would become Chair of Langley and at the end of last year, I found myself having to engage in some robust debate with those who had assumed that it was a simple thing for me to say 'yes'. Honoured to be considered as I was, I felt that I needed to evaluate what God was saying and fight off the scourge of overload. The jury is still out as the saying goes, but at least I have identified some changes that will need to be made if I take on this responsibility. With all of the current initiatives designed to marginalise our Christian values, I am aware that education is the one arena in which we must fight to preserve the right to be heard, so as long as I can maintain a balance in all that I do in my 68th year !

VISIT TO SPARROWS

Thank you again for your prayers for my on-going input into the work of Sparrows in Johannesburg. My second visit happened in the middle of November and I arrived the day after a tornado had swept its way through the hospice village, leaving a trail of mayhem and devastation. Three very large trees fell on some of the buildings. Thankfully no one was hurt, but the events served as a reminder of the force of nature.

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Sparrows is a hospice facility, looking after people infected and affected by the HIV virus and is currently making recovery from appalling accusations and unfounded public criticism of 12 months ago when a false story hit the local and national press. It always takes a long time to recover from this kind of 'attack', but I was blessed to discover that my visit seemed to be an encouragement to those who are there restoring the facility and its credibility, and my report and suggestions for the future were well received by the Lancaster Foundation who commissioned my visit. This is the Christian charity that made considerable investment in building the Sparrows village many years ago and which is rightly concerned to look after its ongoing work and ministry.



FUTURE PROOFING

Interestingly enough, the visit to Sparrows and the consideration of the village's future, made me think more realistically about 'Future Proofing' – the fancy word for sustainability. It is always such a blessing when the work that we do outlives us because its foundations have been well-built and proved to be an investment that stands the test of time. No panic here, but maybe that helps us decide what any of us take on in these changing times, and to make sure that we invest in others who can build on what has been achieved – whether in the local church, a Christian organisation, or in some other area of Christian work.

It is always sad to see a church struggle when the pastor leaves or when a Christian organisation flounders when the CEO moves on. Now be wary of reading between the lines here, because unless the Lord calls me home, I'm not about to give up my Flame responsibility, but I do want to make sure that what is being developed will stand for the future and I am therefore taking some time out and deliberately praying that as we develop our projects and ministry, God will identify people who I can draw alongside for such a time as this.

ST JAMES HOUSE

The Flame office is based in St James House in Dudley in a facility owned and renovated by a colleague who has rolled the asset into his Christian Trust Foundation. He has of late expressed a desire to sell, so the future location of the Flame office became a little uncertain. However, we help manage the property and it provides a small income stream to support our administrative function, but of late we have seen other agencies taking space in the facility – including the MP for Dudley North, Ian Austin. He has

just recently moved into the building and the owner has therefore decided to continue with his intention to sell, but with the current leases in situ. Please pray that if appropriate, the right investor might show interest, who would be sympathetic to the development of this community hub with a distinct Christian ethos in the middle of Dudley. It is actually quite exciting how this vision has developed, and it may well be that over the next few months, we would also see the establishment of a specific facility to help disadvantaged folk in and around the Borough, and of course this kind of activity always provides opportunity for Christian ministry and witness. We shall see.

RAINBOW HOUSE

The work amongst children with disabilities at Rainbow House in Thailand, continues to develop and grow, and in October of this year, we are planning to send some students and staff from Q3 to visit and engage once again. This has proved to be a wonderful opportunity to broaden our students' horizons and also introduce them to an aspect of work overseas that has a distinct Christian ethos. Do pray that this trip will come together well and that it will make a lasting impression on those who make the journey.



TIME OUT

Plans for Time Out 2016 are coming together really well. The dates are Monday 24th – Friday 28th October, again in Bournemouth. We have already booked a speaker – namely Peter Baker (*right*), who is currently the minister at Lansdowne Baptist Church. Lansdowne is being rebuilt, and I am hoping that as part of our time in Bournemouth, we will be able to visit the new facility.



Other guests are currently being arranged, and again I am sure that it will be a terrific time of relaxation, fellowship and ministry, so do make sure that you book as soon as possible. (We have waited a little longer this year to issue booking forms because the Hotel is going through extensive renovation and we had been promised some new photographs. These have only just come through). Needless to say we

are delighted with the level and standard of hospitality that is provided for us by the Cliffside and are looking forward to being back.

We are also considering running a coach / transport service from the Manchester area down to Bournemouth for the holiday, with a pick-up in the Midlands, so if that would take some of the pain out of the strain of using national coaches or the railway network, and you are interested, then please do let Jackie know. We will make sure that we negotiate to make the opportunity as economic as possible.

VISIT TO MADEIRA: MONDAY 11TH TO MONDAY 18TH APRIL

I have been delighted with how this holiday has filled this year. We have almost 50 people travelling with us and because Easter is a little earlier this year, we opted to go a little later to Madeira. This will mean we will benefit from an even milder climate, and what with a lovely hotel and ministry provided by John Price, I know that it will be a wonderful time.



Do pray that God will meet with us as we meet together in those days for relaxation and refreshment and that we will also have safe travel.

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

Many of you have asked about my health, and I am able to report that at the moment all is well. My body complains from time to time and I'm currently trying to cope with stiffness in the neck which seems to have increased over the past few months. Yes I know there is a Biblical precedent for stiff-necked people (!), but this seems to be related to other issues, so I'm currently visiting a chiropractor who has made a difference. However, I think I might also look at a course of physiotherapy as I have recently been advised that that might be more effective at this moment in time.

At Easter I am looking forward to visiting with my good friend and colleague John Daniels. He and his wife now live in Dallas, Fort Worth, and many of you of course will know John from our ministry together in the late 70's and early 80's and not to mention our recent collaborative project with the release of the Still Waters album.



John continues to write brilliant music and for the past 20 years has been involved in orchestrating and contributing to a Christian radio ministry in the States. Sadly, this has recently come to an end, so it will be good to catch up with John and Tami, and in the midst of all the reminiscences, I am hoping there will also be time to look at maybe some new songs.

Pray for safe travel and inspiration as we talk and consider what God is saying at this time.

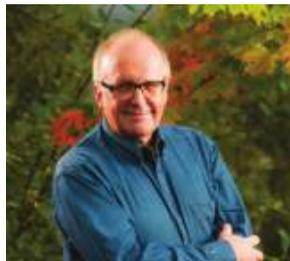
My wider family are well. Brian and Meg continue to be based in Philadelphia, with Brian travelling extensively and Meg involved in counselling work there in Pennsylvania. Matthew, my nephew, is completing his studies in San Diego and doing extremely well and Nick continues to be busy based in New Orleans.

Maurice, my youngest brother, continues to work with handling systems and security with the airlines, so currently is extremely busy and although he is based here in the UK, he also travels extensively. There was one weekend in February when we were all in the air at the same time travelling in totally different directions!

I continue to be deeply appreciative of all the administrative assistance that I get from Jackie, Clare, Stewart and Jenny Beardsmore, and also the practical help that Calin affords in-between sustaining his part-time work as groundsman at the Academy. Without all of these folk, I could not maintain all that I currently do, so do pray for them as they also have their own pressures and responsibilities.

All for now. Thank you for all of your prayerful and practical support. You are so faithful in standing with me in these challenging yet exciting days, and I do value all that you mean to me as I continue to do what I sense God is commissioning for such a time as this.

Yours as ever



PS As you are aware, postal costs are rising. We are really keen to make sure we have all of our partners' email addresses for the occasions we could send updates this way. If you haven't already sent your email information to us, then that would really help when we have 'stop press' detail.