

Across the Pond

April Report 2014- Dundee Scotland



It is often hard to identify a specific point when God really changes someones life. This is because the more we observe His actions within Scripture or within our own pasts, we recognize that He was always working towards changing lives. The turning 'points' we highlight are not then the first time God shows up, but are rather the first time we recognize or respond to the continued long workings of a determined God. In this light I would like to share three current stories in progress. I hope that they encourage you through the the understanding that you are a part of their stories through your continued prayers for God's Kingdom work here in Dundee.



The Lipscomb Spring Break group with four of our locals: Sarah (second from left), Adam (third from left), Callum (first left on back row) and Lorna (front row, third from right)

Lorna...

I've been blessed to watch, at least in the ways I can observe, how God has been working in Lorna's life, a student who has just finished high school last week! The more I learn of her, however, I am continually astounded as to what God had already been doing before we ever crossed paths! I met this young vibrant lady last year as a professed agnostic who was nonetheless the pupil representative on the chaplaincy team of one of my high schools. Among some of our early discussions...which wonderfully coincided with a visit from a team from Harpeth Hills (Nashville) ;)... I remember her surprise and interest as she heard explanations of 'relationships with God' versus just strict adherence to a cold religious code. She

began to express that the understanding of how our life stories fit into and can be explained through the 'Story' was something that she had not previously encountered. One of our young Christian men, Adam, was interestingly chosen (by her) to help with school chaplaincy initiatives and has thus been a constant in her life as well over the last year. Following other encounters this year with chaplaincy and occasional attendance at church events, Lorna jumped at the chance to spend time with our visitors from Lipscomb in March, who were working with us in our religious education and leadership programs in the high schools. Given this short explanation of her journey (though only a small part of it), I can't describe what a blessing it was to see her sitting near the front in worship on Easter Sunday, drinking in all that was offered.

Moreover, she contacted me three days ago, saying that her mother has offered to pay for a trip over to Nashville to visit friends. Lorna asked if it would be cheeky (a great British word) to ask to stay with some of the Christians who had come to visit her. So... Harpeth and Lipscomb visitors who know this young lady.... I'll be in touch soon! Lorna tells me she wants to continue coming on Sundays till September, when she leaves for a pre-planned trip to teach English in Thailand for a year. I'm looking forward to more conversations with this bright young lady and hearing how and why her perspective is changing. Please pray that we can encourage in ways that make sense for where she is at.

Farbod, Mohammed, Zoreh

I've tried to keep you all abreast in short emails regarding Zoreh, Farbod, and Mohammed, a lovely Iranian family that moved into our area. For those new to this info, in our first few months of meeting them, Zoreh explained that she intended to keep her faith of Mithraism (ancient Persian/Roman faith system), but wondered if she could come to worship as she loved to hear more of Jesus' teachings and get to know the church that had made her feel so welcomed to moving here. ;) How lovely...

Since then, Zoreh & Farbod, have better attendance than many of our members (lol), Zoreh asked if it was okay for Farbod to study the Bible with me, Zoreh got a copy of the Bible in Farsi and read it cover to cover in a week! She then approached me and said..."I have a few questions"... I said..."I'm sure you will" (laughing). Last week I had coffee with Zoreh where, among many topics, she express quite openly the following: She feels meeting our church family was a miracle; She didn't have a strong base of faith to grow from as a child, and is so so happy that we are teaching Farbod... and she thanks Jesus for all that has happened in her life over the last few months and year. How about that...

Please keep all three in your prayers as they are still on a journey of discovery...but then, even as committed Jesus people, so are we. How wonderful to get to walk along with others of such varied backgrounds and experiences.

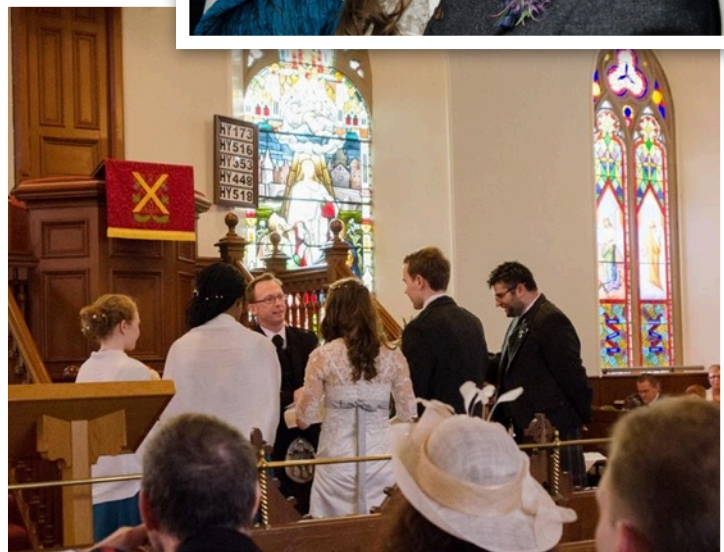
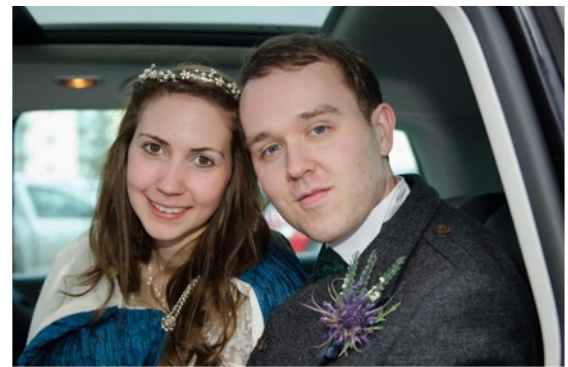
Jack & Bekah

In my experience, even when filling weeks with that loaded term "ministry," one can still look back and occasionally wonder, "have I accomplished anything for God?" Fortunately I have a loving God and wonderful wife... the latter telling me to stop being so silly. So such reflection can have a negative edge, it is helpful in reminding me that we don't need to be able to put our personal stamp of achievement on anything or anyone. The glory and the praise go to the Father. So as I look back, I ask less what I did and more of what I was able to participate in and witness because God allowed me to be present here. One of those great stories I've watched unfold is my friend Jack.

When I arrived off the plane years ago Jack was only 12 years old, and only a few months out from his parents splitting up. His mother then decided it was time to return to her faith and bring her children up knowing God. Over the years, I have been blessed to witness his growth through, triumphs, difficulties, laughter and tears.



Jordan (left) and Farbod (right) on the beach last summer



Jack & Rebekah Speirs (top)
Ceremony in Murroes Church, Angus County (Bottom)

Much of this 'growth' usually seemed fueled by the food he cleared out of our cupboards on a weekly basis following youth activities or a guys night. Jack is one who's eagerness to know God always stood out. I will never forget baptising him into Christ in ice cold Loch Earn following a camping trip almost 6 years ago. In 2012, this now grown man moved down to England for work. Before long he met a young Christian woman, Bekah, and after a time were engaged. As a couple, they began reaching out to friends inviting them to Bekah's flat where they would all discuss the story of Jesus over tea and coffee. Last year I received call from him saying that they had decided that they wanted to return to the Dundee area to get married, live locally, and serve God however he needed them here. In late March, in an old stone church building in the Angus countryside, I was honored to unite the two in marriage.

To see a young couple unite in Christ is always a joyous occassion, but I must say... for Gemma and I... this one was special. With them and other young couples around and active, the future feels bright. They were at our home till 10:30pm last night just hanging out and studying with us (Bekah loves to ask questions...and they are always good ones). Not to mention they are great babysitters... which of course makes them more spiritual in my eyes. Keep these two in your prayers for their journey in marriage and faith.

Other Updates

As previous, monthly updates will contain more stories of how God is at work here. Quarterly reports (which should be out over next week) will include in that more detail regarding specifics such as campaigns, church health, our home life, specific ministry issues, Bible studies etc...

Till then

All our love and peace in Jesus

Patrick, Gemma, Levi & Georgie.

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Levi at the park across from our home (left); Georgie and Gemma at Christmas (right)