

Hello

It's nearly a year since we started Gateway shop and Gateway church. I've been planning to write for such a long time to thank you for supporting us financially and with your prayers. We've achieved such a lot because the Lord has been with us and I want to share all the news with you and to ask you to pray specifically into the challenges we are now facing.

I've been reviewing our journey since we started back in April 2013, and re-reading the email newsletters we sent out since then.

In April 2013 we started a prayer meeting in Withernsea. I knew at that time Jesus was setting Annette and I apart for service. I had a vision for some time for planting new churches travelling up the North East coast of England into Scotland. This is a big vision, much bigger than I am.

Annette's parallel vision is for helping the poor and downtrodden in the communities we will be moving through. She had already started her charity Kingstrust Network and this has gone on to become a focal point for our mission in Withernsea. Since April Kingstrust Network has been a registered charity, praise God.

We sent our first email newsletter out October 2013. At that time all we had was the regular prayer meeting we started in April 2013. It hadn't grown, it was still just four of us fighting on in prayer (Myself, Annette, our daughter Melissa and David Bartle). Melissa developed a serious illness, fluid on the brain. After a scan the doctor's noticed that her brain wasn't in the right place (it was tilted backwards), so she became a bit of a medical celebrity in the hospital. It was serious at the time and she was getting sudden, severe 'thunderclap' headaches. We appealed for your prayers in October 2013 and I rejoice to say that the Lord has completely healed Melissa. It was several months later that the headaches stopped and Mel believed God had healed her at that time. So she did the one thing you're not supposed to do, she stopped taking her medication! We never recommend doing that, but thankfully she had been healed and was fine. Later, after returning to the hospital for a regular check up, she admitted what she'd done and what God had done for her. They told her she didn't have to come back again and everything was fine.

In that same newsletter we asked you to pray for us to get a shop in Withernsea. We were offered 209 Queen Street at the time, but the offer was withdrawn in very strange circumstances. Satan clearly didn't want us on Withernsea high street. We tried again in early 2014 for 27 Seaside Road. This property was ideal as it had an office above the shop so we could use it in the evenings without causing a disturbance to any flat above. Again however in shady circumstances, the lease was given to others.

Very disillusioned, David Bartle and I tried for one more shop 104 Queen Street and we got it in May 2014. The property was bigger and better situated than the one we lost and the rent was very affordable at only £80 /week. However the property needed a lot of work doing as it had been allowed to deteriorate. The shop had a large back yard that would make a great cafe yard but it was ankle deep in rubbish and weeds. We worked stupidly hard to renovate the property and opened the Gateway shop on June 21st 2014. I



remember that we only got the till to work 10 minutes before we opened! You guys gave so freely toward our refurbishment costs that we had money left over to put aside for the church launch. You have been so gracious, thanks so much. The next day Sunday June 22, we had our first church service in the old church hall on Park Avenue. We were exhausted!

Initially the church only met monthly. We planned to launch weekly services in September 2014 after the holiday season with the kids back at school. Through the summer of 2014 we worked hard to finish off the shop. The shop proved to be exactly the vehicle that we believed it would be for meeting people who would become the core of the new church. A significant number of folk who later were to become part of the core of the church were disaffected Christians who weren't at that time attending church anywhere. Pre-launch church attendance at the monthly meetings grew slowly and steadily from 16 to 19 to 20. At this point we were running three ministries: first-Wednesday group meeting monthly in a local pub, the shop and the monthly church meetings.



Gateway Withernsea Church Launch Meeting

On 14th of September 2014 Gateway Church Withernsea held its official launch service. Even that was a close run thing. We lost the use of the church hall in Park Avenue in difficult circumstances and had to find an alternative at very short notice. We managed to get the upper room at the Shores Centre every Sunday except once a month when Shores hold their table top sale. This meant we had to have Sunday Service in the shop once a month. I remember well the prayer meeting when we prayed into all these happenings. It came through clearly to several of those present that we should make the service in the shop a fellowship meal with a short service. This is now our best attended service and the one where we continue to meet new members. It seems that folk are willing to come to a meal in a shop to 'get to know us' well before they will venture into our regular church service.

At the launch service in Shores Centre John Beynon the pastor of King's Church Beverley preached, and then John and Mike Hardy ordained myself and David Bartle and our wives into the leadership of the church. David took on the role of pastor and I the senior leader. We have worked steadily as a team since. We've had our moments adjusting to each other's ministries but things are nicely settled now. David was previously the pastor of a church in Withernsea that closed down in 2012 and he believed that God hadn't finished with the town just yet, so he remained in the area, and now he was officially back in the saddle. Praise God. I was impressed by David's lack of bitterness and keenness just to serve in his calling once again.

2014 closed with the church holding a big Christmas meal in the Withernsea Sands caravan park main hall. We had invited a lot of local friends and supporters so we had 90 people in attendance. The church closed the year averaging 26 in attendance at Sunday services.



David's wife Katy and my daughter Melissa run the Sunday School. Here is David presenting Mel's daughter crystal with an attendance award in April 2015; below May's Fellowship meal in the shop.



Prayer Needs for 2015

Whereas the three ministries: church, shop and pub meeting are growing and flowering there's certainly been a toll on my life. Late in 2015 my business RadioCAD lost its main client in unpleasant and unfair circumstances, Satan once again having a go. The company has gone from a having significant cash reserves in late 2014 to having being on its overdraft limit now. In fact there is not enough money to pay the wages at the end of this month, however I am sure that the Lord will provide and we are owed some money so pray that invoices get paid.

Personally I am struggling to keep up with the demands of running the ministry and running the business and the business has suffered. My business partner Jef Lofts opted to leave the company at the end of May to take up a permanent position with a one of RadioCAD's clients. His circumstances also changed in 2014 as he and his wife adopted a ready-made family and so they need the financial security of a 'real' job.

On top of this I got a serious chest infection in February 2015 and then a repeat in April. This is giving real problems with my asthma and I just can't seem to shake it off completely. All through the late winter and spring I had real problems leading the worship as I couldn't stop coughing. Although I am a lot better now, the problem still hasn't completely cleared up. Pray for me.

I need to cut down my work load and rest more but I can't see how to do this and maintain an income at the same time. Not at the present moment at least. Our church is almost entirely comprised of working class people who don't have much money and don't know (because they haven't been taught) how to give; so church offerings don't quite cover the hire of the Shores Centre. However it's really refreshing to see what God is doing having myself been to many middle-

class churches, I'm really enjoying the change in flavour. Not that I have anything against middle-class people as I am one. It means for example no one starts a conversation with "what do you do?", so we can concentrate on 'being', and that's great. We're seeing people blossom and starting to enjoy being with each other in God's presence, and some days His presence is so strong! I love it. I love encouraging people and seeing them grow.

I've been praying into ways to address our personal financial problems, and I'll describe my thoughts to you so that you can pray into the situation with us. This email is not a request for funds, but a request for prayers - Proverbs 15:22 "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisors they succeed." Hopefully this somewhat long missive will draw you deeper into our journey with us, and that's a great blessing for us. Your prayers are very much appreciated.

Firstly I want to describe the next church plant we've started praying into. It will be in Bridlington East Yorkshire. On boxing day 2014 my son Jorrell and I prayer-walked the 27.5 miles from Withernsea to Bridlington all along the beach. It was the only day that the tides would be suitable, but due to the short days we needed two days to complete the journey stopping half way in Hornsea over night.

My main mode of prayer is prayer-walking. In the summer of 2014 I prayer walked every street and back alley of Withernsea. I wanted to make a prayer connection between the two towns and hence the walk. Joshua 1:3 is often quoted and even in those days it would have been possible to travel by horse or donkey. There is something very grounded and powerful in walking and praying.

Since arriving in Bridlington I have started to prayer-walk every street. Bridlington is five times the size of Withernsea and so it's taking a lot longer to pray every street and back alley. However I'm well on with it. Some think that perhaps I am taking on too much, but it will likely take a couple of years to pray into being a church in Bridlington. So I believe now is the time to start that process. A weekly prayer meeting is not a huge time commitment anyway. Only that properly born in prayer will last, everything else will be swept away.

I have not liked the spiritual opposition we have faced and the constant attacks, but I am told that this comes with the calling. It's been a real struggle for me with anxiety and also panic attacks in the middle of the night, but Jesus is teaching me how to deal with these and they are coming under control as I exercise my authority in Christ.

I need to cut down the hours I spend in my business so that I have more time for ministry. At the moment I am not doing either task well and stuff is backing up as a result. I have prayed into these options, so please pray with me:

1 – Reduce as quickly as practical my RadioCAD work days, hopefully down to 1→2 days /week. I will stop taking on new-product development contracts as these are very time consuming. I will continue with short term work like antenna design, consulting, possibly EMC testing, etc. This is lucrative work and easy on the cashflow without a massive time commitment. To do this I need to heavily trim RadioCAD's overheads so I have already taken a big pay cut and RadioCAD is no longer paying Jef now he's left. My son Richard is working part time for RadioCAD. I have tried hard to get him an electronics apprenticeship locally but without success. Pray for a job for Richard so that I can reduce RadioCAD's overheads further.

2 – I have been advised to use Annette's charity to obtain grants to pay us a wage by putting a plan together to do some charitable work in the local area. Withernsea is a deprived area and so I have been told that there are grants available. My main problem with doing this is that I don't want to be

distracted from my calling and my mission. I simply could not do just any charity work for the purpose of making a living, it would have to be something that adds to my calling and ministry and doesn't just take up my time. I am already time poor. The only thing that might fit the bill is to start a business advice service. Here are my thoughts: Withernsea has a high-school that turns out hundreds of young adults each year, but without exception the aspirational amongst them a forced to leave Withernsea and family and go elsewhere for work. There is no work here other than seasonal, insecure, low paid work in the seaside leisure industry. Our 'commercial /industrial' estate is absolutely and embarrassingly pathetic. East Riding council should be ashamed of it and it makes me mad to see that a local village called Burstwick has a commercial park three times the size serving a village of one third the population of Withernsea. Withernsea has very poor road communications but it does however have a decent telephone exchange and so there is the possibility of encouraging the formation of internet based companies to bring prosperity to the town.

3 – To just free up time to concentrate on church and church planting I could try and get together a group of sponsors who would pay regularly into the ministry and the church planting vision. I have a friend, David Hill, who lives like this. He runs 'trypraying' ministry in Edinburgh. This is an option I'm seriously considering because 1→2 days /week of RadioCAD could generate the bulk of our income, but not enough to make ends meet.

Ultimately, once we've planted enough churches and these are stable with members giving regularly I'm sure there will be enough money to pay Annette and I a salary, however I'm guessing that this is several years away yet.

I write this 'tome' to you so that not only can you see what we're up to but please pray for us for direction going forward. Share with me anything you believe you have received from the Lord.

Please reply with anything you want to say especially if you receive something for us in your prayer time.

Bless you,