

"Behold; I am doing a new thing!"



The rains finally came at the end of July; the roads turned to deep red mud; and Freetown yet again had a regular source of drinking water, which was quite a novelty! However, with the onset of the rains came the end of our time in Sierra Leone. In the first weeks of August we came back to the UK. Have we come home? Well, we've come to the conclusion that 'home' is wherever you are at the time, so we have effectively moved from one home in Freetown to another, quite

different one, in Ware!

The final weeks in Freetown were, as ever, very busy ones. With WEC finishing in Sierra Leone at the end of September, we were concerned that the CDP should have a good handover. A thanksgiving service was held, and all the churches and volunteers who run clubs were acknowledged and prayer for. It was a great time, and a real celebration as individuals told how the club programme had changed the lives of children and the churches themselves! These churches are ready to take on the programme themselves, and we praise God for them.

Catherine's last weeks in Sierra Leone were kept full. She and a couple of others wrote a 'training of trainers' that the team in Freetown used last week to equip volunteers. These volunteers are from local organisations and churches that have a real desire to use the CDP and Parental Training throughout Sierra Leone. The training lasted one week and was quite intensive. The teaching was all done by our local colleagues and reports from Sierra Leone tell us that it was hard work, but exciting! During all this, Stephen was kept busy finishing off the finances in order to hand them over to Hanneke. In our 'spare time' we had the job of saying goodbyes and selling our furniture and possessions. We had more than enough to keep us occupied!

The weekend before we left we invited friends to the house next door (somewhat bigger than ours!) to say goodbye. Throughout the afternoon, despite the heavy downpours of rain, about 50 people came and went and another 12 or so came for dinner in the evening. It was a lovely opportunity to spend time saying goodbye to individuals.

THE HIGHS AND LOWS

Highs...

1 An amazing handover ceremony with the churches involved in the CDP

2 An afternoon and evening spent with friends saying goodbye – Sierra Leonean, Lebanese and ex-pat!

3 Realising the impact we have had on so many individuals.

4 Attending the circumcision of our friend's little boy; who was named after Stephen!

Lows...

1 Saying goodbye....

2 Yet another move (but we're getting quite expert at it)!

For the team remaining in Sierra Leone there are huge changes as the office closes at the end of this month. The local workers are looking for employment or hoping to continue studies. Heleen and Hanneke, the two WECers, are looking for guidance about their own futures. We miss them a lot, but can keep in contact through email, which is great.

And so, we are back in the UK, with the promise that God is ready to 'do a new thing'. Life back in Britain hasn't been too much of a shock, but there are adjustments to be made. Catherine's brother commented when we were surprised that the fridge light was working during the day "Electricity comes as standard here...."! We also still have a tendency to fumble around in the semi-dark for several minutes before one of us will remember that if we switch the lights on they will work!

On arrival back in this country, Catherine fell ill with a virus. After a couple of days with fevers, aches and pains she recovered, but still gets quite tired. The doctors are unsure what caused the illness, but the staff at the hospitals where tests were run were fantastic, and Catherine appreciated the time to sleep and do nothing! Unfortunately, because of Cath's illness and subsequent tiredness, we haven't been able to travel round visiting people as we would have liked. We did however, manage to get a few days away on the boat, which was great. Cath's brother was over from America, so we caught up with him, and Stephen's parents came down and visited us last week.

We are now living in a flat in Ware. It has a lovely big shared garden with pear and apple trees, so we have started living the 'good life', with stewed apples and baked pears! We are looking forward to a year as land-lubbers, resting, reflecting and taking time to wait on God and where He wants to lead us.

God has taught us so much over the past 18 months. They haven't always been easy lessons, but we wouldn't have changed our experience for anything. As we enter into the academic year at All Nations Christian College, we hope that we will have the chance to reflect on some of these experiences and to equip ourselves further for the future. We feel at home with WEC and are sure that God has plans to send us out with them after our time at All Nations. We have spoken to WEC about going to DR Congo but we'll have to see what the situation is like in one year's time. We're really looking forward to catching up with you in the coming months. God bless, and if ever you are passing, you are welcome!

Stephen & Catherine

PLEASE PRAY...

1 For our team members in Sierra Leone – that they would know God's guidance and provision

2 For the CDP; that it would continue to bless the children of Sierra Leone

3 That we'll have enough financially for this year of study

4 For rest as we re-adjust to life in the UK

5 For time to visit churches and friends

6 For time to reflect on lessons learnt in Sierra Leone