

A Card Free Zone

Last year we invited you to vote for the charity that would receive our Christmas card money: the charity you chose was WaterAid, so we've gone with the flow and designated them for this year too — a much better cause than Royal Mail, we hope you'll agree...

2011: A Year of Years

10 years since UKCBD, the [UK Christian Bookshops Directory](#), was launched. Christian booksellers are suffering along with other retailers, with dozens of shops closing down.

15 years since Sue's ordination, and still going strong — from ordinand to DDO: see below!

20 years since we set sail to London on *Almost* to become students at London Bible College, now London School of Theology. Sadly LST is still struggling to balance the books, with more redundancies kicking in over Christmas/New Year: please pray for those leaving, those left behind and those with the unfortunate task of liaising with the staff affected.



50 years since Phil's Mum unleashed him on the world: it's all your fault, mother!! We celebrated with a few days away in York, and you'll be relieved to know that the city survived the experience.

Church, Work and Research

Sue has now been formally appointed as St Albans DDO, Diocesan Director of Ordinands, which is keeping her busier than ever alongside parish responsibilities and research. DDO work is supposed to take 21 hours a week but in practice it's nearer 30 — not surprising since her predecessor was full-time. The parishes have been growing in responsibility if not numerically: we now have a trained baptism preparation team and a bereavement visiting team who work across the benefice. Find out more on the church websites, which Phil is now looking after: www.henlowchurch.org.uk and www.langfordchurch.org.uk

The DThM has taken the hit from the workload: Sue has been unable to do as much as she would have liked and now that she's in year 6, it gets scary. She has, however, negotiated a sabbatical (Sept - Nov 2012) and aims to produce a full draft of the final thesis during that time.

Sue also gives a 'Thought for the Day' on our local radio station on the first Thursday of each month: tune in to Biggles FM 104.8 if you're in range!

GroomNews

Christmas 2011

Holidays

This year we set off along a waterway we hadn't visited before: the River Nene. It's a lovely stretch of water: *Almost* fairly flew along and we found some very pleasant moorings along the way. Two



weeks gave us enough time to make Peterborough and back. *Almost* finished the year with a week in dry dock and now has a splendidly shiny black bottom.

In May Sue joined some of her friends in the Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis for a pilgrimage to Assisi. It was a wonderful week revisiting some of the well-known churches but also getting out into the countryside to see where Francis escaped on retreat. For her own annual retreat, Sue returned to Alnmouth Friary in Northumberland and renewed her acquaintance with some of the writings of Henri Nouwen and Thomas Merton, two of her favourite spiritual writers.

A New Generation

We're delighted to report that we are now a Great Uncle and Aunt to Oliver, born to nephew John and his wife Laura in October. Oliver is already taking swimming lessons and is expected to win Gold in the 2012 Olympics: Oliver, we salute you!

A Super Slimline Sue!

Over the summer Sue realised that she was slowly but surely putting on weight (a factor of increasing age apparently!), so she increased her swimming to five mornings a week bright and early and is now slimmer, fitter and healthier than she has been in years.

5 Quid for Life

5 Quid for Life is a new charity launched this year by Phil and a group of friends to support people with mental health problems whose lives and livelihoods are under threat due to changes to the UK benefits system: discover more online at 5quidforlife.org.uk.



Thank You

Thank you for being there with us through 2011. This comes as always with our love, best wishes for Christmas and prayers for peace in the year ahead,

Phil & Sue