

2008: What has it been for you?

A Year of Changes

For us, it's been a year of changes, starting in February with the death of Sue's Dad, leaving a huge gap in the family and in our lives. Thanks to everyone who has prayed for us, for Sue's Mum and for Alison, Sue's sister; and to those who have helped in many different ways. This Christmas will, of course, be our first Christmas without him and we'd be grateful for your continued prayers as we adjust to his absence.

Another Year of Uncertainty

It's also been another year of uncertainty: at the end of last year it was announced that the Bishop of Kensington was moving on. Since Sue's job as Director of Deanery Licensed Ministers was created by the Bishop as part of his vision for the Kensington Area, this inevitably left a question mark hanging over the project: will the new Bishop want to pursue his predecessor's vision? Now, more than a year later, we're still waiting for an announcement of a new Bishop...

Even so, it's been a very busy year for Sue as her role in the Diocese has expanded: as well as being on core staff for STETS (Southern Theological Education Training Scheme) in Salisbury, where her DLM candidates are training, she is now core staff at London's new St Mellitus College, teaching Old Testament. Most weekends and many evenings she's out & about preaching, teaching and fostering vocations at different churches and events or courses around the Kensington Area. Find out more online: www.dlmkensington.org.uk

There's also been a sense of uncertainty at LST in a year without a Principal, following Derek Tidball's surprise early retirement last year. The School was delighted, however, to welcome Simon Steer as its new Principal in September this year. Again, you can find out more online: www.lst.ac.uk

A Painful Hip

This autumn Sue's left hip has been causing some concern. In November we went to the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre, Oxford, for an MRI Scan and arthrogram; we are now due to meet with her consultant to review the scan results. Meanwhile, thanks to the Archdeacon's generosity, she has been receiving some excellent physiotherapy. By the time you read this we should have a clearer idea of what's happening and the way ahead...

Year of the Blog!

For me, Phil, it's been the year of the blog. Wednesday April 2nd 2008 saw the launch of the Christian Bookshops Blog at christianbookshopsblog.org.uk, followed at the end of June by the launch of *SPCK/SSG: News, Notes and Info*, a blog dedicated to discussing, scrutinising and reporting on the controversies surrounding the handover of the former SPCK Bookshops to the St Stephen the Great Trust (SSG). In July, whilst we were on holiday, J Mark Brewer, the Chairman of SSG, threatened me with legal action if I didn't stop reporting on his activities: I'm now reporting even more! You can read all about it at spckssg.wordpress.com where, as I write this newsletter, we're taking a long, hard look at the Durham Cathedral Shop. To describe things as 'messy' is putting it very mildly...



GroomNews CHRISTMAS 2008

A New Home for Almost

But not the snowy spot on the card that you most likely received with this newsletter: that photo was taken more than 15 years ago when we were moored in Tipton. Special thanks to the Tipton Civic Society for providing us with those cards.



For this year's summer holiday we waved a final fond farewell to Yiewsley and Packet Boat Marina and set off down the Grand Union, up the Thames and onto the Kennet & Avon, a canal we'd never explored before. *Almost* is now snugly moored with the Newbury Boat Company — and with mooring fees almost £1,000 per year cheaper than they were in the London area, we wonder why we didn't move sooner!

Congratulations!

To Phil's Mum, who celebrated her 70th birthday this year; to our oldest nephew, John, who announced his engagement to Laura: they get married in May 2009; and to Sue's sister, Alison, who is now working as a Pastoral Assistant in the Chaplaincy Department at Marjon's College, Plymouth; to you, for reading this far: thank you!

Once again, this comes with our love, best wishes for Christmas and our prayers for peace in the year ahead,

Peace
TO YOU 

Phil & Sue