



Fully mature in Christ...

²⁸He [Jesus] is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. ²⁹To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me. **Colossians 1:28-29**

This past month has been a very busy one for us with Steve travelling to Edinburgh, Bournemouth, Bristol and Cardiff, plus we all attended our England & Wales Reps/Associate days in Lichfield. In addition, there have been lots of teaching engagements locally as well as our recent Refuel conference. All lots of work, but also very rewarding. Over the course of the sessions Steve did in Bristol, we talked a lot about the ministry of getting alongside others through the lens of the rapid growth in the early church. Everyone seemed to find it particularly exciting to see that there was this 'hot bed' of alongsider ministry in and through the life of the Apostle Paul. The time was split into thinking about some of the people who got alongside Paul and those with whom he had a significant impact. For Paul, Ananias' willingness to follow God's leading to go and help him, and Barnabas' encouragement and ability to see his potential and speak on his behalf were massive. Further along his journey the help of Phoebe, who had been a helper/benefactor to him (Romans 16:1-2), and the firm friendship of Luke, who stuck with him towards the end, were also very significant. We might not be a Paul but all of us can be an Ananias, a Barnabas, a Phoebe or a Luke.

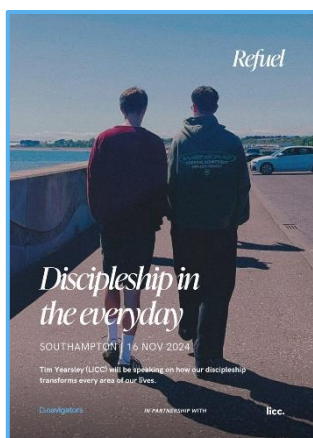
The impact was huge because Paul was able to have a significant impact in many people's lives. One writer quotes a figure of nearly 100 associates or co-workers of Paul. He loved to work, serve and travel with people. It seems like he always had people with him, and we can be confident that Paul was very intentional with them. The above verses from Colossians gives us a glimpse of what Paul was trying to do in the lives of others, namely to present them fully mature in Christ. He worked to this end with all the energy Christ worked in him. Amongst many others, Titus, Timothy, Priscilla & Aquilla and Silas are all fantastic examples of those that Paul helped in such a way that they were able to help others also. What is particularly interesting is how different they all were in terms of backgrounds, gifts and in how they sought to get alongside those around them. Priscilla & Aquilla were working professionals who used their home to great effect to instruct Apollos and play host to churches in a number of locations. Titus was a travelling envoy to Corinth and was likely skilled in mediation and translation. His major contribution came in training up leaders and seeking to instil a disciple-making culture within the churches on Crete. Timothy met Paul as a young disciple and saw firsthand Paul's teaching, way of life, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance and sufferings. A big part of his ministry was imitating such an example with others. Finally, Silas was involved alongside Paul in the highly relational connection Paul had in Thessalonica where they share not merely the gospel, but their lives also. Looking at the big picture it is so fascinating to see all these different people making their own unique contributions as they sought to get alongside others.

Family & Ministry Update

Family: The kids are all doing well in their respective years at school. Ben is in the process of applying to college and has mock exams in February and then GCSEs in May/June. **Please pray for him in this.** The other big transition coming up for us is that Jacob finishes primary school this year. Jacob & Aaron are enjoying learning musical instruments at school and are progressing well with this. Ben, Sam and Aaron all play for the local football clubs and enjoy their weekly training and matches. Naomi has had a difficult friendship to navigate at school these past few weeks, but we've been impressed with how she has managed this with maturity. **Please pray for her, for wisdom about this friendship as she longs to support the girl involved, but it's not easy.**



Update from Debs: Her various ministry contributions are all going well. Families Together, the parent and toddler group she helps to run, has been particularly encouraging. Each week a Bible thought is given for the adults at snack time, and most of those in attendance are not Christians. The team have been so encouraged by how people sit and listen and engage with this each week. We have seen fruit from this ministry in conversations with the parents. This Saturday (7th Dec) Debs is helping to run the 'Families Together at Christmas' event at our church for those with children age 0-7. **She has a great team helping, but please pray for the last-minute preparations and for the families that come, that they would engage well with the Christmas story through the arts and crafts, and the short retelling of the Christmas story that is happening.** Debs has been encouraged by those she meets up with 1:1. Some of these individuals have major life changes ahead of them in the next few months, so **please pray for Debs as she continues to seek to support them in these transitions.**



Update from Steve: This term has felt like a whirlwind with lots of speaking engagements, lots of meetings and the focal point was our flagship Refuel Conference (16th Nov). The work of the International Missions Team continues in full flow, and we are putting together short-term programs for 2025, including, we hope, another trip to Norway! The monthly Building to Last community continues to meet and has been working through some of the One Another statements. Sadly, however, we were not able to run Formation School this year due to a low number of applications. We've therefore taken the opportunity to take stock and pause for a year. We have already had the first of three Alumni focused events which Steve spoke at in November. Above Bar Church has also asked Steve to lead development of a proposed new Ministry Training Scheme. This would replace former intern schemes and would be a means for people of all ages to explore a pathway into further ministry involvement both here and further afield. **Please do pray over the next couple of weeks as he works on the preliminary proposal due before the end of 2024.**

Sabbatical 2025: We are also excited to share that Steve will be taking 1 January to 31 March as a sabbatical. He anticipates that this time will include elements of rest, exercise, study and space to reflect. He will be glad of a slower pace to life for this time and hopes to come back blessed and ready to be a blessing to others.

He has been putting this off for far too long and has in fact never had an official sabbatical! The absence of the more rigorous Formation school timetable allows space for this to happen. We don't take the opportunity to do so for granted, knowing that this is not typically available for most working in secular jobs. However, the Navigators encourage all Reps to take regular sabbaticals, and the hope is that this would provide the space for rest, reflection and refocus that would set us up for the long haul. **Please pray that this would be a hugely encouraging period of rest, renewal and refreshment for Steve.**



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