
Christmas News from Lois and Peter

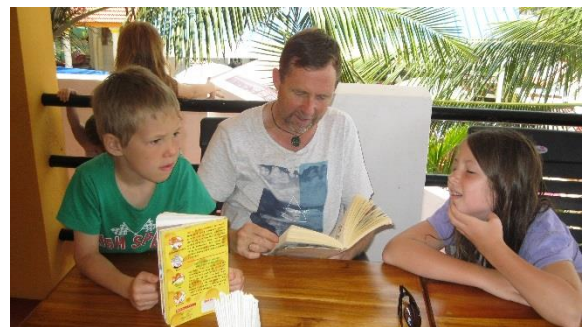


WE WOULD LIKE TO WISH YOU A VERY
HAPPY AND JOY-FILLED CHRISTMAS AND A
NEW YEAR THAT IS FULL OF HOPE AND PEACE

As the wintry days darken, and Christmas lights brighten, global events also both darken and brighten our hearts: darkness to light, that brave Advent theme, invites us to hope for peace and justice. It has been a background theme for us this year, as we have wondered about our part in it...

Having married in the warmth of an Auckland summer, we celebrated our first anniversary in the snow with a short break in the Peak District of England.

Keeping in touch with Lois' family in New Zealand and India, settling into married life together in Coventry, and being around for Peter's parents and children has kept us on our toes. It was good, over Easter, to spend time in New Zealand with Trim and Konnie, James and Julie, and their families, reconnecting with a number of Kiwi friends, climbing Mt Ruapehu, and welcoming the latest addition to the clan – baby Toby.



Between our NZ and India trips, the year seemed to fly by, with plenty to keep us both busy, and a few short breaks on our own, and with Joe and Esther and her fiancé, Rob (wedding date 1st October 2016). Esther and Joe are both in their final year at Cambridge University and will graduate this coming summer.

Esther has been appointed to a graduate engineering scheme with Skanska, while Joe has been offered a post with a computer software company. Both will start these jobs in September 2016.



At the other end of the generations, back in England, Peter's family celebrated the 80th birthday of his father Stephen which included a 'this-is-your-life' photobook that Peter put together. Later in the year, we were able to head to India, joining Jo and Mark and children for a beach holiday in Kovalam, and James and Julie and family who had just relocated to Delhi, where James has taken up a post of principal of a small school. Now with ten grandchildren and their four parents a mere 9-hour flight direct between Birmingham and Delhi airports, it is surprising how much closer 'family' feels!

Peter's work continues inspiring and motivating. In June he was awarded a research grant to analyse the last 3 years of Serious Case Reviews into serious and fatal child maltreatment, building on the previous 3 national analyses he has done jointly with a team at University of East Anglia. There is a lot to do, and just a short time to turn it round, but with two other researchers appointed to help, they are finding lots of really worthwhile learning, which we hope will help promote more effective working to safeguard children in this country. Despite his MSc course in child health being wound down, there are still plenty of other opportunities for teaching and leadership in child protection locally and nationally.

The biggest change for Peter at work though has been dropping to just 4 days per week. At the end of October, after 28 years of clinical medicine, he finally hung up his stethoscope, to concentrate on academic, and child protection work, and to have a bit more time to relax and be with Lois. Having long weekends every week is a wonderful thing. . . and Peter's writing and painting and political energies have gained momentum.



Back in March, Lois finished six months filling in as field coordinator for Servants and she continues to help with various tasks for them on into next year. Mostly though it has been her involvement in spiritual direction in Coventry Diocese that has really taken off this year. She is helping to lead a training programme for new spiritual directors, has run two retreats in daily life, some quiet days, and continues to meet with people for spiritual direction in person or via Skype. These have been a welcome investment of time and

energy – and also something that both of us do together – what a gift.

As we look ahead to 2016, there is much to look forward to, with trips to Belfast, Oslo and Calgary (work), and Switzerland, India and New Zealand (fun), plus visits from two of Lois' children and their



families, two graduations, and Esther's wedding. We have recently started visiting Dudley Lodge, a family assessment centre for vulnerable parents and children, as lay chaplains. That is proving to be inspiring and rewarding, though challenging our comfort zone!

Over the course of this last year we have been exploring, with others, the possibility of setting up a small residential Christian community at a Diocesan retreat house in Warwickshire. We would love to see this develop as a place of healing and wholeness open to those who don't normally get the opportunity to experience such peace and beauty. This, too, has brought its challenges, with ongoing deliberations by the Bishops and others, consideration of a potential role as a reception centre for Syrian refugees, and very little clarity as to what, if any, our role in this might be. So watch this space (or our website/blog).

And then there are our Tuesday evening dance classes (Latin and Ballroom)...



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www.unforcedrhythms.org