

TheObserver

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us...

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light
The Prophet Isaiah

I believe we are seeing the emergence of a new Dark Age. The world is changing and with it, challenges but also opportunities. The jury is out as to whether we have the humility, compassion, generosity, wisdom and courage to make the changes that will lead to good things replacing what is wrong and to bring light into the darkness and healing to the brokenness. Time will tell. *Lord have mercy*

Roy and Shirley Searle Newsletter 2021



The Best of Times:

Back 'home' in our beloved Northumberland. Living in Alnwick. Still going strong and happily married. Blessed as parents and grandparents. The birth of baby Thomas, our eight grandchild and the joy he has brought. Varduyi becoming a UK citizen. Staying healthy whilst getting older, (still able to play competitive tennis, golf, bike, garden and walk). Playing with Lyra. Enjoying work. Writing. The privilege of mentoring a remarkable cohort of young pioneers and missional leaders. Some great friends, neighbours, colleagues, associates, Prayer Accompaniers, *Northumbrian Collective Associates*, a spiritual director, soul friends and *Musketeers* spiritual formation group. A great PA. A lovely summer including a holiday on the Isle of Arran and another at home with some of the family, (hot weather all round). House renovations virtually

completed within nine months. A good builder. Lovely garden. Wonderful *Upper room* study. Double vaccinated and boosted. Grandchildren getting baptised. Middlesbrough getting a new manager and playing attractive football for the first time in years. Partner churches. Top Farm. Portrack and Alnwick Baptist churches missional communities. New regional minister for the NBA. Connecting with people and mentoring, teaching, speaking and hosting online prayer groups and meetings across the world from the desk computer. Garden birds, night skies, sunrise and sunset, autumn colours, spring flowers, country walks, coastal paths. Shane Claiborne at the Baptist Assembly. Mortimer and Whitehouse, *My Octopus Teacher* film, Grayson Perry, Zoe Ball, Claudia Winkleman, Gareth Southgate, Nick Robinson, Mishal Husain, Amol Rajan and Martha Kearney. Alnwick Gardens. Pizza ovens. A sit/stand desk. Electric bike. New kitchen. Redbush tea. Renovated and refurbished house. New roofs. NHS. Thankful.

The Worst of Times:

Few opportunities to be together as a family and spend time with friends. People struggling. Leaders who are weary. Vaccine deniers. People, including some church leaders who think we will get back to normal. The most appalling, morally bankrupt government of our lifetime. The depressing fact that people voted for them. Friends suffering, struggling or bereaved. The death of Adrian Smith. A poor response to COP26. Global warming; fires, floods and famine. Mass migration and a global refugee crisis. The UK's response to the plight of boat people. Cutting Overseas Aid. The consequences of Brexit. The Daily Mail. Propaganda, policies and promises based on deceit. Racism. Misogyny. The disparity between the rich and poor. Litter. Disregard for life and the environment. Russia threatening the Ukraine. The takeover of Newcastle United by a group led by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund and the abhorrent human rights record and policies of the Saudi regime. Polluted seas, hackers and spam.

ENDNOTES: The prophet Isaiah proclaimed a promise of hope; *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.* Never has there been the need to recapture the Good News of the Christian narrative that speaks of light amidst the darkness, hope to transform despair and peace to counter the violence of this emerging new age. Within that promise, revealed in Jesus, is the prospect and the call to a different way of living, where love reigns, where compassion motivates and determines attitudes and actions, where justice, mercy and generosity are extended to all, where gentleness, humility, empathy and kindness govern our lives, neighbourhoods and nations. The reality of God's love for the world and the coming of his Son to redeem, transform and heal enables us to hold a flickering but inextinguishable light in the ensuing darkness.

*We must accept finite disappointment
but never lose infinite hope.*

Martin Luther King





Grosvenor Terrace at dawn (the yellow one is ours)



Happy family; Varduyi, Thomas
Johannes (newborn)



Shirley with eldest
grandchild, Isaac



Isaac, Patrick and Eden, Belfast



Gabriel and Alice, Oxford



Roy and Lyra, Isle of Arran



Nick, Jessica and photobomb
polar bear



Ben, Jude, Isaac, Patrick and Eden



Shirley and Annabelle



Varduyi - UK Citizen! 🙌👏



Ben and Jude - holiday in Northumberland



George, Eden, Lyra, Alice, Francesca, Annabelle, Jessica, Jude, Shirley, Thomas, Roy, Joshua, Varduyi, Ben, Nick, Patrick, Gabriel, Isaac
Family Gathering October 2021



Alice - a senior chorister



Joshua after 100 mile ride for Dnipro



Isaac celebrating his Grade VI piano



Gabriel with one of his many medals



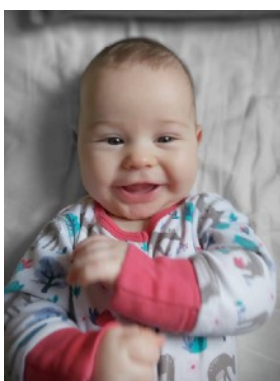
Eden on her 11th birthday



Lyra on Storm, Isle of Arran



Grandad tee shirt



Thomas



Annabelle



Patrick



Brother Chris and family and Ben and family, in our garden



Bike ride around Kielder Water



Francie and Bella, Lonhoughton



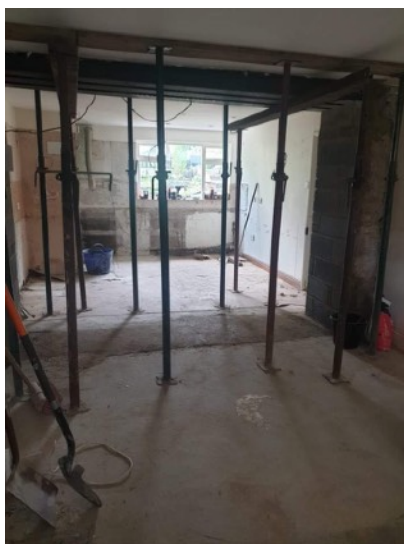
Lyra's 4th Birthday party; Lyra, George, Francie and Bella



Nick and Jessica, wedding anniversary weekend away



Father and son; Joshua and Thomas



House: Before...

House: and After



Roy and Shirley, Alnwick Gardens



Happy Lyra



Varduyi and Thomas



Looking towards the Cheviots from Corby Crag



River Breamish, Ingram valley



Ben, Eden, Isaac, Jude and Patrick, Longhoughton



Ready for the next tennis match for Alnwick



Musketeers Group



Co-Author Alan



Northumbrian Collective Associates: Craig, Kate and Roy



Baptist Union Core Leadership team and Pioneer Ambassadors



Our garden



Contemporary nativity scene

We have sent very few cards this year but have given money instead to two charities in particular:

Side By Side Refugees: <https://sidebysiderefugees.org>



and **Dnipro Hope Mission:** <https://www.dniprohopemission.org>

