

An Open Letter to the Church in Sheffield from Dave & Louise Luck

‘I thank my God every time I remember you’ Philippians 1:3

Dear Friends,

Many of you will have heard in the past year about our son Ben’s fight with cancer. From the first signs of him being seriously ill last June we asked friends to pray and the message soon spread among many of the churches in the city and beyond. Ben went to heaven on April 30<sup>th</sup>. While we are heartbroken that Ben is no longer with us it is important for us as a family to state our thanks for all of the prayers that have been prayed for us and to let you know the difference that they have made.

2 Corinthians 4 talks about being ‘hard pressed but not crushed, perplexed but not in despair’. That sums up a lot of how we feel at the moment. We feel a great deal of pain and a huge amount of loss but we do not feel hopeless. For many weeks we have felt very limited in our own ability to pray but we are very conscious that many people are still praying for us. We can only explain our ability to cope as being due to the fact that people are praying for us. It’s not a product of our own spiritual lives or any sense of having a stiff upper lip.

We cannot pretend that Ben’s death is not very hard for us to fathom. We believed we were praying in line with God’s Biblical and prophetic word and we expected to see breakthrough and healing. The reality is that we have known God’s presence in this time despite the outcome rather than because of it. We have too much evidence of God to doubt that he is with us though we are a long way from the tidy theology we used to hold.

The easiest answer to the question of ‘Where is God in all of this?’ is that God has been in the people and churches faithfully praying for us, bringing us meals, giving towards a new central heating system and much more. As we said on the day of Ben’s celebration there have been many times through the past year when we have been able to say to people outside the church that the church’s response to our situation has shown what the church is supposed to be about. We have been overwhelmed by people’s love and practical care. We thank you for that and believe God’s response is ‘Well done, good and faithful servant’.

We are aware that for some people it is impossible not to see Ben’s death as in some way a failure. We do not believe that anyone could have done anything more than they did. As well as the blessings mentioned above there are a few other things people should know to give a balanced account of the last year’s prayer.

A number of medical staff described Ben’s recovery from pneumonia in November as a miracle. We didn’t expect him to last the day but instead we had another 5 months to treasure Ben and prepare for life without him. Losing him in November would have been infinitely harder.

Ben died in comfort, without pain. Two days before he died he had a great day, chatting and joining in with some music. Whilst there’s nothing we wanted more than for Ben to live we couldn’t have asked for him to have had a better death.

The final thing we would like to do is to ask you to hold up the Children’s Hospital and Bluebell Wood Hospice in prayer. Both do an amazing job. Bluebell is almost entirely dependent on fund-raising. Ben spent his last two weeks there and they cared not just for Ben but for us as a whole family. We would want anyone facing a similar situation to be able to receive that same support. However most of its work is actually in providing vital respite care for parents caring for children with long term disability. Please make people aware of Bluebell’s work and pray for it where you can.

Every blessing,

Dave & Louise