

Andrea and Mark Hotchkin

May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you. Reflections on Psalm 33.

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Dear Friends,

As we prepare to return to Chad, we are reflecting on our time in the UK both with family and friends and as we visited our link churches. Over the past two months we have visited 16 churches meeting for coffee, meals and church services; it has been a pleasure to get to know many new people and visit old friends. As we covered 3,968 miles by car we were made very aware of the beauty of what the Lord has made. At the same time we realise that have made 1.45t of CO2, which we need to offset using the BMS Carbon Calculator so that the beauty can be maintained.

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. Psalm 33 v 6

From the hills and mountains of Northumbria and Scotland to the dolphins off the coast of Cornwall we have seen so much loveliness in the natural world. So many towns were full of stunning flowers too, enjoying the mixture of rain and sun that the summer has been. People asked us were we missing Bardai and we could say yes we were.



Although the mountains there are not green, they have a stark beauty of their own and the starry skies too in Bardai are constant reminders of Gods involvement in this world.

Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere him. Psalm 33 v 8.

We pray that as we and others consider creation the place of God as creator will become clearer to all.

Whilst on holiday we have also had time to visit some of those things of our world which are made by human hands, we have marveled at the construction of the canals and lock systems still around after 250 years. Castles too and churches new and old. More recently we have visited a small church in Cornwall attached to the school where Andrea used to go. The church is full of art work and sculpture mainly from the early 20th century made by the group known as the Newlyn artists, the Christus Mundi - the risen Christ stood on the world-reminding us that:

From heaven the Lord looks down and sees all mankind from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth- he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do. Psalm 33 v 13-15



Our work at the hospital also involves using our hands as we treat the patients and much of all our time and yours is spent on practical everyday tasks may we allow God who is so interested in us to form our hearts as we become his hands on this earth in all we do.

Many of you we spoke to will know that we talked about justice both here and in Chad. Psalm 33 reminds us amongst other things that:

The word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does. The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love. Psalm 33 v 4-5

One of the quotes that Mark used in his sermon reminded us that as we seek for justice, we need to look at the systems around us and see what can be changed. George Orwell wrote:

'One's got to change the system, or one changes nothing.'

System change is however not always easy for us working in a government hospital. We plan to meet with Dr Abdel Kerim and Mohamed Hissein after our return to Chad on the 13th of September and make plans for the year ahead, we need wisdom as we discuss important subjects together, such as staffing numbers and hospital organisation.

As we return to Chad we are aware that it remains in a state of precarious political calm with elections now not due until October 2024. There has been recent conflict in the North between the Chadian Army and the FACT rebels in Southern Libya and the rebels have now renounced their ceasefire it remains to be seen what this turmoil Sudan in the East with many refugees coming into the country. Niger to the West remains a source of concern as it is so close to us and Libya has recently had renewed conflict.

We trust in God to keep peace in Chad and to bring peace to these countries in the right way necessary for each one.

The eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those who trust in his unfailing love.

We wait in hope for the Lord he is our help and our shield. Psalm 33 v 18 and 20

Ruth is doing her best to finish her dissertation as I write this and she is hoping to have a part time job with the migrant advisory service that she now does some volunteer work with.

Rebecca has started her first job and although busy is enjoying it.

We are excited that we will be visited in Chad by Sangare a nurse we worked closely during our time in Guinea, 1993-2003. He will come with his son and briefly visit us in Ndjamena and Bardai.

Praise

For good church visits and safe travel

For the beauty of God's creation

For the talents that God has given us to share

Prayer

For safe return to Chad and good contact with the hospital director and administrator

For Ruth to finish her dissertation

For Rebecca to have the energy and enthusiasm she needs for her job

For the world to see the creator's hand in its beauty

For all of us to allow God to form our hearts and hands as we seek to bring justice to this world

Thank-you for all your generous gifts, prayers and interest in our work.

We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. Psalm 33 v 20 and 21

Mark and Andrea