



So, its that time of year where I try to sum up a year of activity (and some inactivity!) in two sides of A4. So hold tight, here we go...

The New Year started with a bang! Phil and Sam, her sister and I trekked out to Leuven in Belgium to see in 2006 with Phil's friend Guy. We had a great time, and spent the last few hours of '05 with a lovely meal out in the city centre.

It wasn't long after I returned that I found myself back in Europe again. Over the last year 24-7 Prayer, the charity I work for, has been looking at how we can work together more effectively after a period of rapid expansion. It's no easy task to combine more effective working with the often seemingly chaotic nature of what God is doing through the movement, but we're trying! The whole process has been quite frustrating for me, as a lot of the people I work with have never experienced the kind of everyday disciplines associated with working in a larger business environment that come as second nature to me. We're getting there though, if somewhat slowly, and the first working group location at a chalet in Switzerland, somewhat made up for a few frustrating meetings!



April saw the first of two trips up to the Lake District. My girlfriend Shirley and I stayed in a small cottage with friends Amo and Karen on the banks of Wast Water, Shirley's favourite Lakeland location. The weather was great, and we tired ourselves out clambering over Great Gable and Kirk Fell. The second trip was in September, and although the weather wasn't quite so good, Reading friend Catharine and I, plus two of her friends, managed to remain dry on our two days of walking up Skafell Pike and The Langdales. I've had some good views this year!



In May I managed to fit in an overdue visit to West Calder, near Edinburgh, to see friends Pob and Steph - just prior to the arrival of their daughter Mollie! Pob and I disappeared off for Pob's last couple of days hiking before becoming a dad, in the Kielder Water region of the north of England. On our return we spent an amusing evening out in Edinburgh with 24-7 friends Chris and Anneleen, including a bout of cow riding on the city's new street decorations!



Soon after, Shirley and I also had a great time visiting her friend Kasia in Poland. This was my second trip to the former Eastern Europe (apart from a brief journey through the former Yugoslavia while InterRailing), and it was fascinating to see the evidence of a country going through immense social and political upheaval. After a few days at Kasia's home in Warsaw, we travelled by train to the beautiful city of Krakow for couple of days. Some of the church architecture in the city is stunning, and I was particularly taken by the Franciscan Church, with its refurbished Art Nouveau interior and stained glass.

In July and August Shirley was busy training me to barbeque (or braai if I'm using her South African term for it!), and she was pleased to see that I can actually make a good go of it - for a Brit, at least! During the latter month Shawn, a friend of mine from Portland in the States, was over in London for a 'maths and the arts' course. I took it upon myself to keep him entertained, and we had a few great days out in London, and back nearer home in Bath. At the end of the month I made my annual 'pilgrimage' to Reading Festival with Shirley and Philip. One of my favourite bands, Muse, was headlining this year, and their show has to be one of my Reading Festival highlights of the last few years.



September is a busy month at work, when we run our International Gathering for all those involved in leadership around the globe for 24-7. This year we were in London, and so we were even busier than usual (the hosting nation does all the organisation). Another friend from Portland, Kathleen, was over for a few days before the event, so it was great to be able to hang out with her before all the business started. During the gathering, it was really encouraging to hear afresh all the things that are happening as a result of God answering the prayers of those involved in our miraculous global movement! If you fancy hearing a few amazing stories, check out www.24-7prayer.com.

For my birthday in October, Shirley had the brilliant plan of going over The Channel for a day trip to France. We managed to book a cheap ticket for us and the car, and drove down to both Boulogne and Saint Omer, via a windswept beach on the west coast. After a couple of nice meals and a fun trip to the local hypermarket, we returned to Reading very early the following morning, tired but elated from our journeying.

And so to the final trip of the year, Shirley and my trip to South Africa. I'd never made it to Africa in my travels over the years, so I was really looking forward to exploring a new part of the world. I wasn't disappointed! I really haven't got enough space here to tell you what an amazing time we had, so if you'd like to find out a little more and to see some pictures, have a look at my blog, www.curve.org.uk. The Cape Town area is amazing, and I'd love to go back at some stage to spend some more time in the winelands. The Kruger Park was awesome, and we saw all of the 'Big Five' animals, as well as cheetah and a whole range of other interesting wildlife. Highly recommended if you get the chance.



That's it! 2006 in two pages. I hope that you too have had a great year, and that your Christmas and New Year are fantastic times of celebrating Christ's birth.

May Jesus bless you richly this Christmas, and in the coming year.

Love and peace,