



## Looking to the stars



Crossing cultures means we transplant ourselves from one space to another space.

Those who call themselves overseas workers lose a lot and Christmas is often harder. Being away from family, tradition and memories comes with a sacrifice. Beth Gregory suggests "As cross-cultural roamers, we come and go, we put down roots and yank them up, transplanting ourselves from this continent to that, from one home to another. It's hard, bitter, painful. But, almost against all odds, it happens: we again make a home."

We will miss home this Christmas (as we have known it in the UK) for all sorts of reasons. We will miss the simple pleasure of curling up to a fire and watching the Christmas tree lights sparkle and dance. We will miss the noise of a Christmas card falling through the door, and the simple pleasure of blu-taking them to the wall. We will miss the singing of traditional Christmas carols which don't quite translate when the climate is opposite to the UK. Most of all we will miss family, although delighted that John and Maureen (Steve's parents) are spending Christmas with us. This year Jane will miss not wishing her mum Happy Christmas on Christmas day. Boxing day is the first anniversary of her death.

Our truth telling confession is that 2016 has not been an easy year. And when we do cross cultures it doesn't always appear to make sense whether that's

physically, geographically, spiritually or emotionally. However, theologically it makes perfect sense. God is a sending God who calls his people to uproot and move where they are called. Ponder the story of Abraham who at the age of 75 left everything and moved to a place he didn't know. To the observers around him it probably didn't make sense! And when it got tough for him we notice that God invited him to look to the stars, and invited him to see things from a different perspective.

There is another perspective in celebrating Christmas in a place that might not feel like home. There are new traditions to be made, new cultures to be celebrated and new climates to be enjoyed. There is also the invitational gift of a deeper reliance on God when the disorientation is overwhelming and the landscape is confusing. In the past few weeks we have enjoyed the smell of freshly cut grass whilst eating Christmas cake under a beautiful big blue African sky! We have also enjoyed walking in open spaces and encountering Zebra in the wild.

In a conversation with the two spiritual leaders Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu they talk about a differing perspective in their new book, *The Book of Joy*. The image offered by Lama is one of a *wider perspective* and a *larger perspective*.

Abraham's journey was by no means easy and when it got tough God said to him "*raise your eyes*", and "*rise up*". God's invitation to Abraham was to have a *wider* and *larger* perspective.

The *wider* and *larger* perspective for followers of Christ is that Christ came for us, and God is with us, Immanuel. It's a lot to take in but it doesn't get any better than that!

Thank you for all your love and support to us during the past 12 months. We want to especially thank those who contributed to 'Beyond the Book', which raised an astonishing R 12,448 to buy resources for the church! We wish you a Happy Christmas and a peaceful 2017 and that you would know Emmanuel - God with us.

Love,  
Jane and Steve x (and Mudiwa!)

