

Our Trip DOWN UNDER

In mid February we left the ice and cold of UK and flew to New Zealand to start our nine week trip. We began in Waiuku, New Zealand with Carolyn and Phil, Charles' sister and brother in law, where we had five days to connect with family and friends.

We then left for Christchurch and our South Island tour where we first visited two families, Jamie and Rachel from Living Waters who had gone to NZ for a couple of years, and Simon and Annie who are related to us via Anne Sibthorpe who is Simon's sister. Little did we know that barely more than 24 hours after our departure the devastating earthquake would strike. None of them were injured, but Jamie and Rachel have needed to return to UK, and Simon and Annie cannot use their home because of earthquake damage. These events quickly disappear from the news, but the challenge to get back to normality remains.

We so much enjoyed having extended time with Carolyn and Phil as we travelled together. Phil was on a quest for gold, and every stream and beach presented the potential for collecting more particles. We loved the wild, west coast with its blowholes and rugged seascapes. We visited the glaciers, enjoyed Queenstown, cruised Milford Sound, and had a spectacular day at Mt Cook. We saw a couple of folk bungy jumping, but did not participate ourselves! We stayed with a great couple who farm 5000 sheep and were given a tour of the 2200 acre farm.

We then flew to Brisbane to Audrey (Joyce's sister) and Bill, where both sisters were able to celebrate their birthdays which happen on succeeding days. There was time to catch up, as it had been five years since they were last together. After little more than a week we were off to Sydney to stay with a cousin, where we enjoyed a wonderful day on Sydney harbour and saw the spectacular Opera House and Harbour Bridge.

We then drove to Mamre Farm, the ministry base of Harry & Doreen Westcott. We had heard so much about the Go Forth Faith Arena and all the great things God has done in this place over the years. We preached on the Sunday at the Church that meets there. It was also a joy to meet Gill Grover who together with her family, are doing so well following the tragic drowning of her husband Colin. We also spent an evening with Mike & Julie Sinclair, Gill's parents, who used to be at Living Waters. This place is a shining testimony to the way that faith triumphs over adversity. Harry & Doreen came here at the lowest ebb of their lives and have supported the Grover's as they have proved the faithfulness of God in the face of tragedy.

Our next stop was Adelaide where we reconnected with the Stanford family. We have known Brian and Gaynor for many years, but we were thrilled to meet their son Bronte and his wife Katherine, who lead a church in the city called Meeting Place where they seek to connect with ordinary people and make faith relevant for everyday life.

At last we flew into Cairns and arrived in Mareeba to be with our son Ben, his wife Anne and five of our grandchildren. We had not yet seen 7 month old Edith – who is gorgeous. We had two and a half weeks with the family and just entered into their life as

it happened. We visited Ben in the MAF Hangar, saw the work and met his colleagues. Escorted the kids to school on their bikes and took Estella to Kindy.

