

Coffee with a miracle

We had coffee with a miracle on Easter Monday. Meet Russell - a man with the capacity to reflect sunshine into the lives of everyone he meets. A man with courage despite the way fortune has treated him. We were reminded of the power of prayer.

On 5th September 2002, on the way to church, we saw ambulance men lifting an apparently lifeless body from the wreckage of a motor bike, hit by a taxi. Without knowing who it was, we drove immediately to the hospital to offer what support we could to the relatives. It was a shock on arrival to find long-time friends of ours, Russell's mother and father, being told that their son had severe head and body injuries and was unlikely to survive. Russell was known to the staff in A&E as he worked there and had been on his way to work that morning. His nursing colleagues were stunned and felt helpless in the face of seemingly fatal injuries.

Back at church urgent prayers were sustained by many local people who knew Russell. At the hospital the family kept watch. Many weeks passed with Russell on life support. The medical staff ran out of intervention ideas. Hope was vanishing. Then one day he woke up, saw his mother and smiled. Hopes of further recovery were very limited.

Yet, slowly over many months, Russell regained enough ability to walk with aids, to speak again, to swallow safely. He will always depend on his powerchair to get about, his portable type machine to help others to understand his speech, and thickener for all his drinks. He used to swim, but now jokes that he hasn't got enough thickener for the pool and suggests that frogspawn might help! With admirable capacity to adapt, he lives independently and insists on making the best of things. The hospital continued to employ him until covid-related issues resulted in redundancy. His sense of humour and willingness to engage are a gift and a blessing – 'cheekiness', he calls it. When a friend told him he was nearly 90, Russell dryly replied, 'Show-off!'. When asked if we could write his story, he quips, 'I didn't know I was so famous!'

Russell says he owes his life to the people who prayed for him when medical expertise was beaten. So never underestimate the power of prayer – when you next have coffee with a friend, you may be in the presence of a miracle...!!

