

Dear friends, lieve familieleden, dear colleagues

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all of you

We celebrate this mid-winter fest of dark nights and new beginnings. And as we do, I can't help but note some moments of great wonder.

Christine, Josh and I attended some jaw-dropping, moving events in the Paralympic Games:

Five blind Chinese playing football with five blind Iranians while thousands of supporters watched in great silence, as the football players strained to hear the bell in the football to focus their athletic efforts. Was this really possible? Could disabled people do such awesome feats? It felt like watching a Michelangelo statue, a Leonardo painting – the human condition revealed in its most awesome state.



We watched the 1500 meter men's running race, where 7 out of the 8 men finished in about 3 minutes. The eighth runner, one-armed, Houssein Omar Hassan from Djibouti had injured himself before the race, but had decided that this was his day to run the race. He ran the race in 11 minutes 23.5 seconds to a standing ovation of 80.000 people, all cheering, all crying, deeply moved by Houssein Omar Hassan deciding that nothing was getting in the way of him making a significant contribution.

It seemed that in these events we were confronted with the possibility of people, all of us, living amazing lives, no matter the suffering, the disabilities, the impediments – and, that possibility was celebrated in the stadiums, and with our neighbours, people on the street and on the tube.

I had a chance to attend a community event earlier this year, where the efforts of diabetes champions and volunteers were celebrated. People from all sections of the community who help their neighbours and friends live well with this disease. It was great to hear Christine mark the unique contribution of a number of these people in front of the group. She is continuing to develop her new Social Enterprise, a not-for-profit organisation, dedicated to engaging patients in the process of managing long term disease issues in the local community – challenging people to make a contribution, responding to their passion. They have received their first grant, and are hoping to launch in April 2013. We also went to a party recently, where we had a rare chance to dress up.



Our son Max (22 years old) finished university in July and joined Teach First. His assignment is to teach mathematics at a secondary school in Brotton, northern Yorkshire. He teaches 11-16 year olds in an environment, where a pass mark is an exception. He is thriving in a life, where he is challenged at so many levels.



The picture here was made by Chiara, Stefan's wife. It shows the 3 London based brothers and Chiara visiting Max a couple of weeks ago, walking the Yorkshire Moores.

Patrick (now 27) shares Christine's commitment to health care and public health. He works in East London on a range of issues such as the organisation of A&E services during the Christmas holidays, hospitals who have overspend their budget and the responsiveness, or lack thereof of GPs to

the needs of their patients. He seems to get promoted at least once a year.

Stefan (29) married Chiara Alfano a year and a half ago. Chiara got her PhD in September in the Philosophy of literature by considering how current philosophers read Shakespeare. She is applying for teaching positions all over the world, while tutoring gifted kids in difficult schools. Stefan works in Accenture and manages large projects. There was an important and painful moment for him a couple of months ago, where he stood up to the office bully. This is a rare occurrence, requiring great courage. And, when it is done, all the misery such people cause, comes out, and people can breathe and feel safe again at work.

I continue to facilitate leadership workshops in Europe, Africa, Middle East – at the moment for Amgen, DHL, J&J, Lloyds Bank, Exxon and BP. I continue to be fascinated by new ways to engage people in conversations about their authentic connections to their colleagues, their direct reports, their bosses and, of course, themselves. I also enjoy wonderful conversations with amazing colleagues, and good food all over the place. Here I am discussing cooking spinach with the chef of a hotel in Dubai.



Joshua is 11. He contributes to my life enormously by getting me on the floor with him and building

Lego models. We build all kinds of things. Here is a model of a Leonardo da Vinci bridge we build in the back yard. He and I then did a workshop where we got 60 kids in his school to build smaller versions of this. He is a fine musician and entertains us on the French horn and the piano. Here he is playing the piano:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kRTQ0mSmo18>



So, here we are on Christmas eve: amazing smells come from the kitchen, the family is on the way, packages underneath the tree. Christmas and 'holiday' messages come in from good friends and far away places.

One more thing: I have a colleague, who greets people at his workshops, people he has never met, with the phrase: "I am glad to see you", a wonderful presumption about the human condition. I hope you run into that a lot this coming year.

With love, friendship, collegiality,

*Paul and Christine*