

I'm trying to do a little better this year and get my Christmas message out before New Year's. It's been a bit of a funny old year. Although it feels like we've been busier than ever, it's been a little light on achievements and highlights. So please bear with me as I give you a bit of a run-through.

Sadly, the year didn't get off to the best start. We were broken into. Unfortunately, I discovered this early on the 1st of January, as I was hurrying out the door to head to Cairns Airport. I had just enough time to wake Emma, explain what happened, then drive down the hill to catch a flight to Horn Island.

Luckily, there wasn't too much damage or loss. The lock on the front door was destroyed, and they took a couple of old phones. In these cases, it tends to be bored kids looking for car keys to go for a joy ride. They did manage to get my electric bike out of the garage, but as the battery was dead, they only made it a couple of metres into the front garden before discarding it.

I then spent a couple of pleasant days up at "the Tip" (aka the Torres Strait) doing check and training for one of the local operators up there. You may be aware that one of MAF's key marks of mission is partnership.



In February, tragedy rocked the MAF Asia-Pacific world. One of our much-loved pilots was killed in a road traffic accident on his way to work. The pilot in question was a colleague, student, and friend. He left behind a wife, a young family, and a massive hole in the Arnhem Land programme.

Shortly after this, I was asked to provide some relief services to the programme during this fragile time. Although heartbreaking, it was also incredibly moving to witness how the community grieved and, through a strong foundation of faith, began to put itself back together again. It amazed me how many lives had been touched and enriched by this one individual. Despite the sadness surrounding this situation, I still had an amazing tour. I maxed out my flight duty allowance and was even lucky enough to do a ferry flight to and from East Timor, relocating the belongings of a family moving there.

In June, we managed to make it back to the UK/Europe for a family holiday. I'd like to apologise to all the people we didn't manage to catch up with. However, this was a much shorter trip and we really wanted to focus on being together as a unit and showing the kids a bit of Europe, rather than our usual madcap, whistle-stop tour trying to catch up with as many people as possible. This is the first time we've done a trip like this since joining MAF, which has been... WOW... ten years! Oh yeah, that's right—we also celebrated our 10-year anniversary.

We had an amazing time. We hired a camper and headed across the EU—our first time since having a blue passport. I think we managed 11 countries in 11 days, ranging all the way from southern Germany and Switzerland to Andorra and the Pyrenees. Although the kids didn't always love all the driving, I think we gave them some memories to treasure. Navigating the windy streets of Monaco in our large van is something I'll certainly never forget.



In January, I started the role of Head of Training. With this, I gained a team of very junior instructors—well, I started without any instructors really, but thankfully we've managed to fill a number of the positions. However, as these things go, none of the individuals are quite qualified for all the work required. This means that almost every spare moment of my time has been taken up with staff training and development. I'm very grateful for the efforts and determination of my team, and I'm very much looking forward to starting to reap the benefits of our hard work next year.

In September, I took over the role of Head of Operations. This means that I am now responsible to the aviation authority for all training activities. Although it's a fair increase in responsibilities, I was pretty much doing the job anyway, so my day-to-day hasn't really changed.

The family are all great. The transition to high school has been a real challenge for both the kids. Zeb seems to be coming through it and picked up a swathe of accolades at the school awards night. Beau is still finding her way. Please keep her in your prayers as she navigates the complicated landscape of academic struggles and burgeoning teenage years. Emma is as busy as ever, working three jobs and generally being a pillar of the community.



So, when I list it all out like this, I'm thinking that maybe it was a more eventful year than I gave it credit for.

The year is ending with a bang; I've maxed out my flight duty again, and both Emma and I are still working on Christmas Eve. Now we're both looking forward to a nice, quiet, probably hot and wet Christmas with the family. I'm certainly hoping for a restful week or so to recharge before it all begins again next year.

Thank you so much for your ongoing love and support, and I wish you the very merriest of Christmases.

All our love J, E, Z, B xx XX xx