



CHAPLAIN'S BLOG

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These are the words I never wanted to write

SO this is the column I never wanted to write. And it breaks my heart.

It started with a letter to the *Worcester News* a few months back from mum praising the hospital staff and explaining all the hopes and dreams and fears of being an expectant parent. Little did the parents, Lisa and Russell Ventura know then what a journey would face them and their little one, Frankie.

And so with hope and courage and resilience they dealt with the news that little Frankie had a cleft lip and palate, and with energy Lisa appeared as a guest blogger on my site, revdavidsouthall.com, telling of her experiences and determined to use this for good and to raise awareness of the Cleft Lip and Palate Association.

By now many of our lives were intertwined with this journey. We, too, had become part of it, hoping and waiting with expectation to see this beautiful little boy.

So after the all-clear of a final scan, and a breath of relief, devastating news.

A blood test had detected something – a rare chromosomal anomaly which brought terrible, tragic, wicked news. Frankie would not be able to survive outside of his mum's tummy.

By this time I now counted Lisa and Russell as friends, along with many others. I had met nanny and grandad, shed tears, and talked about the coming days. Together we made

plans that no parents should have to make, of how to say goodbye to their child.

And then, mum could no longer feel Frankie moving; and Francesco Enrico Ventura was born sleeping at 4.43am on Friday, November 29, 2013 weighing 4lbs 10oz.

I have so much more to write. Of his baptism and blessing which I had the privilege of being invited to take on the ward; of the kindness and concern of the delivery midwives under the leadership of Matron Rachel Carter; of holding this beautiful boy in my arms and wishing for him to wake, to make a movement, to cry; of the funeral some days later – dignified, celebratory, beautiful.

Only God knows the hell that Russell and Lisa went through.

And yet, through it all, they held on; and could even see glimmers of hope. They are indeed remarkable people; no wonder Frankie was such a remarkable boy.

Their bravery has enabled them to create Frankie's website – frankie.russellventura.co.uk – in which he tells his story. And their aim is to show "how one special unborn boy changed the world even after his death...".

So I count it an honour to post this as my tribute to Frankie; a privilege to count Lisa and Russell among my friends. And I share their story with a hope that we might spare a few moments of silence and prayer for them all.

Celebrating the good news stories from
Worcestershire hospitals at revdavidsouthall.com