

MARCH NEWS - Christmas 2010

"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us,
That your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among the peoples"

Psalms 67v1-2 NIV

Dear Friends and Family,

I don't think there is a single human being that couldn't heartily pray the first line of this psalm. It is the ultimate ecumenical prayer suited for every creed and confession! It expresses mankind's first and foremost cry to God - help me, bless me, do good to me. It expresses a rather childish and self-centred approach to the divine. This is not however to be scorned; God encourages us to bring our needs and our requests to him.

However, a mature Christian faith will move beyond this to the second line of our quote. Here we see that the main motivation for the request is not that we might have a pleasant life and enjoy nice things, but that God would be made visible and glorified through his activity in our lives and on our behalf.

Mature faith realises that the petty circumstances of our lives have no ultimate significance. If I die in a palace or a council flat, what difference does that make? If I die surrounded by wonderful possessions or with nothing, of what ultimate significance is that?

In stark contrast, if God can have been experienced by others in and through his activity in the circumstances of our lives, that can have enormous and eternal significance. Just how enormous is shown by the rest of this short psalm which reveals a wonderful progression - God blesses his people - the World notices - the World worships God - the whole Earth is blessed!

All of that can happen when God's people ask him for good things with the right motivation.

May God help each of us to desire good things for good reasons this Christmas season.

Our Year in Pictures



Here is a picture taken during our summer holidays. We went to the Champagne region with our friends the Cooks from Burton. Here we are doing a tour of a Champagne house—what else! Great company, great fun! Now that we are a 'dispersed' family these times together are ever more precious!



This picture was taken when the Re-Beginners' group, that Stephen helps run, visited a local monastery as the final activity in a series of sessions looking at prayer. A wonderful old monk spoke to us about his life of prayer. It was really inspirational for all of us. Here we are having a picnic on the way there.



Here are the March men celebrating Joshua's 18th birthday, with a pint in the Irish pub in Dijon (yes, they are everywhere I know!). We then went for a proper meal in a real (French) restaurant!

Here is Sharon and her work colleague Iryna in Paris. They were doing an intensive 3 day English course for a large pharmaceutical company. Sharon is really enjoying being a professional person once again. She finds the work stimulating and is appreciated by her clients and her employers. We are very grateful to God for this provision of work for Sharon.



Here is Joshua pictured on the campus of Stirling University. He has really settled in well to student life. He is working hard at his studies and doing well. Ben passed all of his modules for first year and is well into second year now. He is heading towards more computer and physics-based studies. This year he doesn't have to do work experience, for which we are thankful—you may remember we spent a month getting up at 4am to take him to work!! Caleb continues at school, he has two years to go and needs to think about what he will do after school. He is more sporty than his brothers and had a bike for his birthday in October. Mum and Dad are struggling to get used to being on their own all week—and Caleb misses his brothers being there at weekends. It is yet another change for all of us. Remaining adaptable, flexible and tolerant doesn't seem to become any easier with age!



Here is our new priest, Yves. He is very open and welcoming to us, and has given Stephen lots of responsibility. He is now doing the parish accounts, finding readers every Sunday, helping sort out a sound system, and run the re-beginners group. Yves worked for a while in science and came into the priesthood later. He is responsible for a huge number of villages. Please pray for his health, physical as well as spiritual. He and four colleagues are keen to run Alpha and have asked us to be part for the team. We accepted gladly, and after some training in January to refresh our memories, we hope to begin our first Alpha course in French in April. Praise the Lord!

Once again thank you for your prayers and support. God bless you all!

