

MarchNews - October 2011
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All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Psalm 139v16



We find ourselves standing at a bit of a crossroads at present. At such times it is good to have the reassurance of the above verse. No matter how confusing the situation we find ourselves in, we can be confident that God has foreseen it and that he has planned and prepared our way through it. Hallelujah!

Most of you will be aware that our dear friends David and Diane Bjork have now moved to Cameroon to begin a new adventure. We are excited for them and pray they will know a time of joyful and fruitful service for the kingdom. However, their departure leaves us somewhat on our own here in France.



Also our sending church, Burton Community Church is undergoing a time of great upheaval and is at present without a pastor or leaders. We have received so much from this fellowship which stood with us right from our time at college, through to our call to France and right up to the present time. This church has encouraged us, supported us and acted as our steering group, helping us with an annual process of reflection and appraisal of our ministry and lives. We are incredibly grateful to God for this fellowship.

Even if the church as an entity disappears, we hope that the friendships and contacts will continue. All our prayers and blessings go with these fine people and we pray that God will give them new spiritual homes if necessary, so that they might grow and thrive, to the glory of God and to the extension of his kingdom.

Thus, unwittingly, we find ourselves in a very new situation. With David and Diane's departure and the situation of our home church, we must now face up to the fact that our existing support network has suddenly disappeared. In the light of the above verse, we must see this as something God is in control of. So the question is - what does God want us to do in response to this situation? There seem to us to be a few options:

1. We could try to find another UK church ready to serve as our sending church, to support and oversee our ministry here in France.
2. We could try to create an independent steering group of selected individuals drawn from different fellowships but without any one church being our home.
3. We could approach mission organisations to see if they would take us on.

None of these options are straightforward or easy for us. Perhaps there are even other options that haven't yet occurred to us? Sharon and I also feel that perhaps the time has come where we can share our experience and support and encourage others who are called to the same kind of ministry. Thus we find ourselves with key decisions to make for the future. So over the coming 6 months we will be praying and seeking God for his direction. We would really like you to join with us in this and we invite you to share with us any counsel or word from God that you might have for us about these key decisions.

Other Prayer Points:

The boys have all re-started their studies. Joshua returned to Stirling at the end of August - this year sharing a flat with 5 other guys! Benjamin has moved back to Belfort - this year he and a friend are sharing a flat, and he is loving his course! Caleb is in his final year at lycée - we praise the Lord that Caleb was allocated a place for him in the school dorms - so he didn't have to change lycée, as we feared he might.

Stephen has started his school bus job again. He is also continuing with his Masters studies. He has just the dissertation to complete. SO far the outline has been approved and he is now writing the first draft. He hopes to complete this during the current academic year.

Sharon has also now restarted work with Linguaphone after her summer holidays. We are grateful to God for this provision of essential finance given our precarious situation of having low income and 2 boys at university! The company seems to be doing well, with extra part-time staff being hired for the winter season.

In the parish we started another ALPHA course on the 24th September - a Saturday morning 'Coffee and Croissants' ALPHA! We have been granted the use of an abandoned hotel in the centre of Sombornon - complete with mounted stag's head on the wall!



Not having been used for 3 years it took a LOT of work to clean it and get it ready. However this helped to bring the team together and was an opportunity for people with more practical gifts to use them in the service of the Kingdom. Nine guests attended the introductory session, the majority are men and a few even under 50!!!

Stephen is doing a lot of the teaching - we opted to do 'live' teaching instead of the DVDs this time - a challenge for our French!! Please pray that we will see hearts and lives transformed by the power of the gospel. We are

currently trying to find accommodation for our Holy Spirit weekend, more difficult than you might suppose....

The Archbishop recently wrote a glowing recommendation of Alpha in his on-line 'blog' - a fantastic referral and one which we hope will do much to increase trust and appreciation for Alpha in the whole diocese. Part of the previous team we were involved with has moved on to begin another course in the neighbouring parish of Bligny sur Ouche as planned. 18 guests came along on their first evening! So there are 4 Alpha courses in and around Dijon over the next three months.

Please remember to pray for God's protection over all the Alpha guests and the team too. Remember Father Yves and the priests of the other parish as they take a giant step of faith in promoting evangelism in parishes where that has not happened for forty years or more.

Our parish of Vitteaux is trying hard to get parents involved in catechism, but so far things are not going well. Very few parents feel able to be involved in passing on faith to their children - in the past, 'specialists' took responsibility for it, just like Sunday School teachers, and many parents these days feel unable to participate at even the most basic level. Please pray that things would change.

We generally avoid speaking of finance, but we would appreciate your prayers for God's continued provision for our lives. At present we aren't 'making it' financially. So please pray that God would give us further opportunities to earn money, or raise up new supporters to stand with us in this way.

Again, please be encouraged at God's answers to your prayers. With much love

Stephen, Sharon, Ben, Josh and Caleb March