

MARCH NEWS - March 2011



"By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another"

Gospel of St John 13v35 NIV

Dear Friends and Family,

I have recently been struck once again by this verse - where Jesus gives the authenticating test for all groups that would call themselves a Christian church. It is their love for each other that validates, or invalidates, their claim to be Christian.

This test is a hard one to pass. Neither is it a 'one-time' test. Relationships, by their very nature, move and change, problems come and go. It is therefore a test we need to apply constantly to our fellowships and to ourselves.

I wonder how often in my life I would have failed this test - failed to be recognisable as authentically Christian? I wonder how often my church would have failed to be validated by this test, recognised as a Christian church.

May we, in the grace of God, find help to live lives *'worthy of the calling you have received'* (Eph 4v1b).

News for Praise and Prayer

Parish Life:

We are excited about recent developments in our involvement with our Catholic parish. Father Yves has very much welcomed our input into many areas of parish life. Stephen got his first invitation to preach on the Sunday of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - at both of Father Yves parishes! It was nerve-wracking preaching for the first time for a while and in French, but it was very positively received. Father Yves has also asked Stephen to speak at a Lent evening on the 1st March. So please pray for that!

Stephen has been asked to become a member of the Parish Life Team, with special responsibility for bringing evangelism into the centre of things. Along with Stephen being the Parish Accountant, a member of the Economic Committee and helping to run the Re-Beginners group and Sharon's involvement in admin and running the choir and playing on Sundays, all of this evidences the acceptance we have experienced and we feel very privileged to be able to serve our catholic brothers and sisters in these ways. Please pray that our service would be a blessing and help promote evangelism and discipleship within the parish.

ALPHA:

Our first ALPHA course with Father Yves other parish of Sombernon, starts on 4th April. The team is starting to come together and we are starting to get to know each other. An ALPHA course has recently started in Dijon Cathedral and 75 attended the opening evening and 50 are now attending the course itself!

Our course couldn't cope with numbers like that (we could handle about 20 max), but please pray that God will prepare hearts and minds and make people in Sombernon open to the invitations they will receive. And pray most of all for the team and that the people who come on the course would encounter the love of Jesus and come into a wonderful relationship with Him.



David and Diane Bjork:



David and Diane are currently in Africa where they are visiting universities in francophone countries. David has now been offered a professorship at Yaoundé University in Cameroon, starting in September. Please pray for all the visas, admin, accommodation and support issues to be resolved and that this will be for them a place of joyful, fruitful service. We hope to see them on the weekend of the 16th April, as they make a stop-over in France on their way back to the USA.

Burton Community Church:

Sharon was able to visit BCC for the weekend last month. It was a great time of renewing fellowship and sharing. We do praise God for this fellowship and all that they mean to us. We managed a Skype call with the leaders and propose to do this on a regular basis. Please pray for the fellowship as they seek to know God's will regarding the future of the church.

A Car:

One of our friends from the village was selling a second-hand car and asked us if we would be interested. It is an Opel Meriva 1.3 cdti, 2004, 83,000km. Given that our Mondeo has done nearly 200,000km we had been thinking of trying to change it. After much prayer we agreed a price with him and said that we would try to buy it. Two hours later, Sharon opened an email and it said that someone had sent us a gift of £1000! We really saw this as confirmation that our step of faith had been correct. We have until April to find the rest of the money, but we feel confident that God will provide.



Sharon's Linguaphone Job:

As Sharon is currently employed on a pro-rata basis, her monthly salary varies quite considerably. Plus she gets no paid holiday or sick pay. Given our modest means this makes life difficult. Sharon approached her employer asking about the possibility of becoming a salaried employee. This would mean a slightly lower hourly rate, but a regular monthly salary. Her employer has agreed and she hopes to sign a new contract in March. We praise God for this change, which should make life a little less stressful.

The Boys:

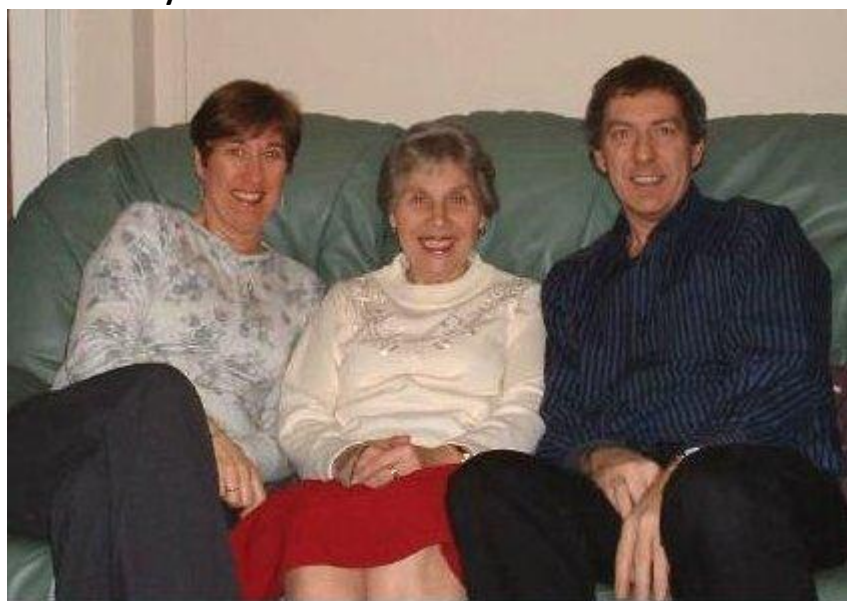
Ben has gone back to Belfort to Uni. He is still doing well and really enjoys life there and has a good group of friends. He passed his driving theory test and starts driving lessons this week.

Joshua enjoyed his 2 month break with us over Dec/Jan. He is now safely back at Stirling Uni and seems to be settling back in well. He is very involved with the Christian Union and has become a Small Groups Coordinator.

Caleb is about to head back to school after a mid-term break. He is working harder on his studies and has some important exams this June.

Please pray for all the boys that they would work hard and succeed in their studies and that God would guide their paths with regard to their futures.

70th Birthday Celebration:



Stephen's mom will celebrate her 70th birthday this month. Stephen's sister and her husband Jon, kindly paid for Stephen to visit his mom, with Lis for a long weekend 24/2 - 1/3. It was a great time! Lots of fun and family teasing! We even managed to hook up a Skype link with Stephen's sister Sarah and her husband Glen in Canada - what a hoot that was! Great to be able to celebrate together and thank God for all that Mom means to us.



Paris Weekend:

We are looking forward to the weekend of the 26-29th May, as Gordon and June Bell have invited us to join them for a weekend in Paris! This will be a great opportunity to meet up with our friends and also to sample the delights of the beautiful city of Paris.

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Note : March Family 2011 Prayer Reminder Fridge Magnets are now available! If you want one - just ask!

