



*"I believe, but I've never felt anything" « I go to church, but sometimes I ask myself why. »*

Dear Friends and Family,

These are some of the things that we have heard people say during the ALPHA course that we have been running over the past 5 weeks. For us as group leaders it is wonderful to hear people expressing a sense of their searching for God and their desire for a deeper experience of his presence. For we know that any desire for God is created by God, and that he creates such a desire only because he is working to ultimately fulfil that desire.



*One of the Alpha Teaching Sessions during the weekend*

This last weekend was our ALPHA Holy Spirit weekend. We were hoping and praying that, for our guests, it would prove to be a time when they encountered God's love in the new and deeper way that they were seeking and that their desire for a real experience of God would be fulfilled.

God's response to our prayers was way, way, way beyond our expectations! This weekend we saw God at work in peoples' lives in the most powerful way. Let me cite an email that was sent by a couple who were guests at the weekend, to thank the team.

*"You have brought us more than we could have imagined. Your prayers have swept through us and the Holy Spirit has filled us. For us, who are going through a difficult period, this weekend came at just the right time. We will never be able to thank you enough. Thank you for your prayers that we felt upon us. You have enabled us to feel all the love of God which has swept through us. There are no other words than 'Thank you to all' to express all that we have received this weekend. »*



*Being a French Alpha course, the meals were rather better!*

I must be black and blue because I spent most of the time pinching myself! Here we are two Protestant evangelicals in a team of Catholics including a priest and a deacon, running an ALPHA Course « Holy Spirit Weekend » in Burgundy, France and experiencing the Spirit of God moving so powerfully and transforming lives! It was just incredible, and everyone on the team has been blown away by the experience. What an incredible time! I don't think we have had such an intense experience of God's Holy Spirit at work for a very long time. Just wonderful! All we can say is « Glory and Praise be to God! »

The current Alpha team is drawn from 5 local parishes; no one parish felt they had enough volunteers to be able to run a course themselves. This is good, but of course now that our group has seen God move, the inevitable question is 'what happens after Alpha for us?' We need discernment and wisdom for the future. The next Alpha course is already arranged for September in a village an hour's drive from us. So it is too far away for us to be involved. Please pray that God would show us how He wants us to be involved in future Alpha courses, or after-Alpha ministry.

On 1 May Father Yves invited me to preach again in both of his parishes at the Sunday morning mass. My sermon on Doubting Thomas was very well received. Again, I am pinching myself and asking myself, « Is this really happening? » A lay Protestant evangelical being invited to preach at a Catholic mass in two French parishes - It's crazy!

I have also been contacted in recent days by someone who has read the book I wrote with David Bjork « As Pilgrims Progress », a book in which we explained our approach to Evangelical/Catholic cooperation (Still available to buy at all good online retailers!). The person contacted me simply to share that God has called him and his wife to Spain where they are trying to develop the same approach of working together with Spanish Catholics. Amazing!

It was also a real blessing to be able to welcome David and Diane for a weekend just before Easter and to renew fellowship with them. They are truly an inspiration to all who know them, and we are praying that the details of their future in Africa are sorted out quickly.

We were also delighted to have friends with us over the Easter weekend again this year. It was great to feel a real sense of anticipation during Lent and to be able to really celebrate together. The same weekend saw us take delivery of the 'Noddy car' - as Stephen calls it! We are now the proud owners (or at least Sharon is proud!) of a very small Opel which is fantastic for driving to Dijon and back, since it uses half the fuel of the old Mondeo! Thanks to all of you who generously contributed to the car's purchase - we saw God move in a miraculous way in supplying what we needed!



As you can tell, God has been pouring encouragement upon encouragement upon us in recent weeks. We can only watch incredulously and say « Praise the Lord! » And we acknowledge absolutely that it is your prayers, your precious, faithful prayers over the past 11 years that are being answered in these incredible events! Be encouraged! Keep praying!

I have also been asked by a British/French couple to do a marriage blessing service on 27<sup>th</sup> August. Please pray for this that God would use it to reveal himself and his love to all involved.

Our boys are all doing well. Benjamin is about to finish his second year at Uni and is set to progress onto the next stage of his engineering course where he will specialise in Information Technology. He is also taking driving lessons and we hope he will pass his test this summer.



Joshua has now successfully finished his first year at Uni. He was also elected 'Fresher of the Year' and 'Comedian of the Year' at the University Christian Union end of year awards ceremony! He is desperately looking for work, without success until now.

*Wonder how this guy got elected "comedian of the year"?!*

Caleb is still hanging in at lycée. He is just about scraping through; academic work is just not his thing. He has been invited to go on a camping holiday to Corsica with his girlfriend's family. So we will need to get his scouting skills up to scratch - much watching of Ray Mears no doubt!

We do want to thank you for your prayers for our boys. Please continue to pray for them that God would continue to work in their lives, and that he would draw them closer and closer to himself and that he would reveal clearly to them his direction and calling for their lives.

Father Yves has invited Sharon and I to work with him next school year in creating a youth group for 12/13 year olds in our parish. Please pray that God would clearly show us the way forward in this, bring along a good number of young people and enable us to build relationships with the young people and help them come to a real and living faith in Jesus.

Sharon now has a full-time contract with Linguaphone. Whilst this brings more stability financially, it means longer working hours, and we are currently trying to work out the best balance between this and her work in the parish. Please pray for wisdom and discernment in this. Stephen still works on the school bus run but has recently been wondering whether God might not have something else in mind for the future? As yet no clues, just a sense that changes might be around the corner. Again please pray for God's will to be clear and that we will have clear discernment when the time comes.

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

*Stephen, Sharon, Ben, Josh and Caleb March*