

MARCH NEWS - November 2012



Dear Friends and Family,

We do apologise for the long delay (6 months) since our last newsletter. We have delayed writing one as we have been continually hoping that some of the loose ends would be tied up and that we would have something definitive to share with you. Sadly our situation remains unresolved and 'in flux', but we thought it was about time we made contact!

We have much to thank God for over the past six months:

Stephen passed his Masters' degree and received his certificate by mail yesterday.

In October we had the joy of meeting up with over 150 people at a National ALPHA training weekend, held for the first time in our nearest city, Dijon. The participants were 75% Catholics and 25% Protestants, joining together to learn how to share the gospel of Jesus more effectively using the 'ALPHA classic' and 'ALPHA Youth' courses, and also to encourage each other and be inspired by each others' testimonies. What a great joy it was to see Christian unity being expressed in the service of the gospel!!

We also had the joy of being invited to do the prayer ministry during the 'Holy Spirit Weekend' of a sister ALPHA course in a neighbouring parish. To see 17 guests on the weekend, (in a parish where there has been no adult evangelism for 40 years!) was amazing! Quite a few young mums were on the course – so we prayed for whole families to be touched by the gospel. 9 people came to us for prayer, and each one showed clear evidence of the Holy Spirit already at work in their lives. It is SO easy to pray in such cases, you merely say "Lord, finish what you've started!" What a joy!



Benjamin found a six month placement working as a software engineer in Strasbourg. He has been there since September and is enjoying the experience, especially since he is being paid!

Joshua went back to Stirling University, he is now in his 3rd year. He is enjoying his studies, working very hard, very involved with the Christian Union and also in a local church. He is looking at the area of language acquisition of children as a possible area to work in after university, and has applied for voluntary work in that area during the holidays.

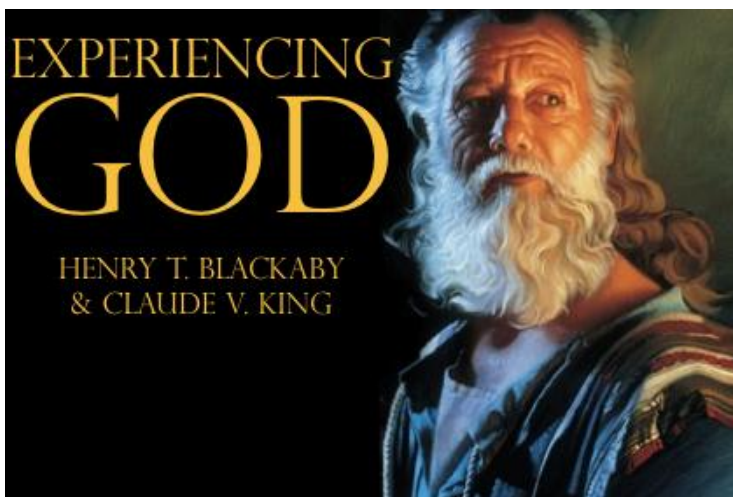


Caleb went off to Gendarme training, but after 2 days he was amongst 30 of the original 80 cadets, who decided that army life was not for them! He has since applied to the French Police National and awaits the opening of their recruitment in 2013. He has also investigated the possibility of going to Bourgogne University to study law. So we continue to pray and we wait to see what will open up.

We have struggled financially over the past five months, with our outgoings exceeding our income by around 500€ a month. Fortunately an endowment policy we had taken out 22 years ago with our mortgage (during the very brief time we were homeowners!) matured a few years ago and that gave us a small cushion.

But this was rapidly disappearing and we were seriously asking God what was He saying to us in this situation of inadequate income? Were we to make some change in our situation? Was Stephen to try and get a 'proper' job? Was God calling us to some kind of professional (i.e. paid ministry?).

We struggled for many weeks and, to be brutally honest, we started to 'thrash about' – Stephen started applying for jobs, checking job sites, trawling vacancy lists etc. Even going for an interview with a local electronic servicing company. And all of this without having heard from God.



Finally, by chance Stephen decided to convert to mp3 the "Experiencing God" cassette tapes that have been so significant in our lives (now available for free download from our website, should you wish!). Listening to Henry Blackaby's teaching Stephen was convicted that he should be listening to God, and only after God has made His will clear, should we look to make the appropriate changes.

So we repented before God, Stephen withdrew some applications that were still outstanding and we set ourselves to continue in obedience, in this place to which God has brought us, until such time as God makes his will clear.

Shortly after having gone through this process we received an unexpected gift of £5000! Which gives confirmation, (at least to those with the eyes of faith!), that God was using the circumstances to bring us back to where we should have been in our relationship with Him.

Our circumstances remains unsustainable in the long term. But now we at least have a few months' grace for the way forward to become clear. We would ask you to join with us in praying that God would show us what His will is for our future, in His time and in His way.

We are starting to get to know our new parish priest Father Albert Zoungrana. He has been appointed as the Diocesan Priest responsible for ecumenism and has welcomed our presence in the parish. He attended the ALPHA training in Dijon and seems keen to try to launch our first ALPHA course in the Vitteaux parish next year.

He has his hands full with two parishes, comprising 48 villages to try and turn around! He would certainly benefit from your prayers.

Sharon is finding full-time work a struggle physically and also a frustration in that it leaves her little time and energy to be involved in parish activities.

Again, we can only ask God to show us what He wants us to do. We do not know if God wants us to stay here, or to move to somewhere else? Whether Stephen should seek secular work, theological teaching work, paid ministry, or stay as we are?

We place ourselves and our lives in God's hands and ask Him to lead us in the way that we should go.

This coming weekend, along with Father Yves, we are running a discipleship weekend with some of the people who did ALPHA with us. We are staying in a local convent and spending two days looking at what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. We are a small group – 11 of us in total – please pray that this will be a significant time in all of our lives. Pray that we would all encounter God in a new way and move forward in our discipleship.

Over the past two weeks Stephen has been on holiday from his school bus job. He has been using the time to complete a first re-write of his book project "Jonah – The Epistle of Wild Grace", a life-application commentary intended for personal and group use. He has currently completed re-writing 103 out of the 168 pages – in both French and English! A French lady is working with him, helping him perfect the French language version. He hopes to have completed the re-write by the end of November. At which time he will start to contact English publishers to see if anyone is interested. Please pray about this. A friend who is a Scottish poet in the Celtic tradition has agreed to write some poems to be placed throughout the book. Which is an encouraging development.



In December we return to the UK for a weekend. Sharon celebrates her 50th birthday! Some friends from Burton have kindly paid for us to go to Center Parks with them, to celebrate this auspicious event! Should be fun!

Grace and peace

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