

MARCHNEWS Christmas 2012 / New Year 2013



2012 - The Good :

ALPHA has been a major encouragement to us this past year. From March to May, Stephen helped lead a third ALPHA course for the parish of Somberton which had about 15 guests. We also held 4 after-ALPHA sessions for people who have been through the course with us, just trying to keep contact and to encourage them to develop good spiritual habits.

In October there was a national ALPHA training weekend held (for the first time) in Dijon. It was such an encouragement to see so many people from both Protestant and Catholic churches coming together to share experiences and to receive training in how to use the ALPHA evangelism tool.

An end of year get-together of people from the surrounding 5 parishes who have run ALPHA courses was also very encouraging. Everybody was enthusiastic about ALPHA and we heard testimonies of changed lives and deep encounters with Christ. Each parish group has now committed to running at least one ALPHA course per year!

We also had the privilege of being invited to do the prayer ministry during a Holy Spirit Weekend for a course in a neighbouring parish. It was an amazing experience to see God at work in people's lives in a profound way.

This year we also helped to run a discipleship weekend with Father Yves in which we sought to help people who have completed the ALPHA course with us to begin to understand what it means to live as a disciple of Jesus.

We have also enjoyed several visits from friends and family during 2012. Our Canadian niece Amber visited us in March, was great to be able to show her something of our beloved France. We also enjoyed a summer holiday in Sexey-aux-Forges in the Lorraine region of France with our friends the Cooks – a great time!

Sharon also enjoyed a long weekend in Bournemouth with her Mum. Another highlight was meeting up with friends at Center Parcs in December to celebrate Sharon's 50th.



We are very proud to see our boys succeed in their studies. It was a major answer to prayer that Ben managed to find a 6 month IT placement, and one that was paid! It has been a positive time for him working as a software engineer in Strasbourg. He goes back to continue his studies at Belfort university in February. Joshua is still doing very well studying psychology at Stirling; he will be doing voluntary work running psychology experiments during his Jan/Feb holidays.



Caleb obtained his Baccalaureat! He did some serious revision and managed to ace his exams – we are proud of his achievement!

Stephen also obtained his Masters degree with Merit – an MA in Global Issues in Contemporary Mission - three long years of study have now drawn to a close!

Our day to day involvement with our parish continues. As one aspect of this we continue to run a teenage group in our home, around once a month. We are just trying to build relationships with these young people and to encourage them to continue in the faith.

We have also been encouraged this year by the fact that a fellowship in Bransgore have decided to support us. It is a real answer to prayer for us and we hope to visit them in the early part of 2013.

2012 - The Bad:

This year hasn't been all joy – there have been disappointments and struggles too. In September our parish was re-organized and Father Yves is now no longer our priest. He has become a great friend and a real partner in mission. It is difficult for us to come to terms with his departure.

Stephen also had a bad car crash in the fog in November, which meant our newest car was written off. We have still not managed to find a replacement; the little money we have received from the insurers makes this difficult. Rural life with one car - an old and very fragile one at that - is both complicated and disconcerting.

2012 - The Ugly:

There has also been some 'general unpleasantness' during this year. During much of 2012 Sharon has not been on top form. She had shingles for several months and then has struggled with the on-going side-effects of reaching 'that certain age.'

We also miss our boys not being with us very often. We now only manage to get together about twice a year – this is also difficult to come to terms with.

Caleb went off to join the Gendarmes in September – however the experience was so unpleasant that after two days almost half of the 80 recruits left. This was a blow to his self-confidence and also meant he had to find a new direction for his future. He will start a law degree at Bourgogne university in January but has also registered to sit a competitive entry exam for the French national police at the end of January. We continue to pray asking God to make His will for Caleb clear.

2013 – The Unknown

As we look forward to 2013 there are many question marks. Over the past few months we have had a sense that God may be preparing us for a change of direction. So we have been praying asking God what He wants us to do? We remain unsure whether our future is here in Villy en Auxois or elsewhere? Now that Stephen's Masters studies are completed should he look for secular employment, or paid Christian work? This is a serious matter for prayer for us in 2013.



Stephen hopes to finally complete his book on Jonah in the next few weeks! It is a commentary designed for personal and group meditation it is entitled "Jonah – The Epistle of Wild Grace". He has been working on this for around 12 years! It will be good to complete this and to see if anyone is interested in publishing it. A French language version is also in preparation.

If God calls us to stay where we are then 2013 will be a challenge in terms of building new relationships – with Father Albert Zoungana our new parish priest, with the new couples and individuals who seem to be arriving at church, with creating an ALPHA team and launching our first ALPHA course in our own parish of Vitteaux.

We thank you for your prayers and support over this past year and we count on your continued faithfulness for whatever God calls us to do in 2013!

Stephen, Sharon, Ben, Josh and Caleb

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