

## MARCHNEWS June 2013



Dear Friends and Family,

*"...I know whom I have believed,  
and am convinced that he is able  
to guard what I have entrusted  
to him until that day."*

*(2 Timothy 1v12b, NIV)*

This verse encouraged me this week (and the well-known 1883 hymn based upon it by Daniel Whittle).

I was struggling a little, wondering whether God had forgotten about us, seeing no light at the end of the "tunnel of uncertainty" regarding our future.

It was good to be reminded that Saint Paul, who was suffering far, far worse than us, was sustained by his firm conviction that God had both the will and the wherewithal to bring him through his temporary difficulties and into glory. Good to hold on to that!



As we said in our last newsletter that we have felt that God might be about to move us on to something new. As we have prayed and sought God over the past months this feeling has only grown and strengthened. However, we still have absolutely no idea what our next assignment might be. As you can imagine this is a somewhat disquieting situation. On the one hand we are trying to prepare ourselves to move ; on the other hand we have no concrete direction or timescale. Frustrating!

We would ask for specific prayer that God would speak to us and to those around us in order to guide and confirm our future direction. If you feel that God says anything to you regarding our situation we would very much appreciate that you share it with us.

The few possibilities we have sought to explore so far have all come to nothing! This is good in a way, it keeps us from wasting time and energy exploring wrong avenues, but humanly speaking it is somewhat demoralising.

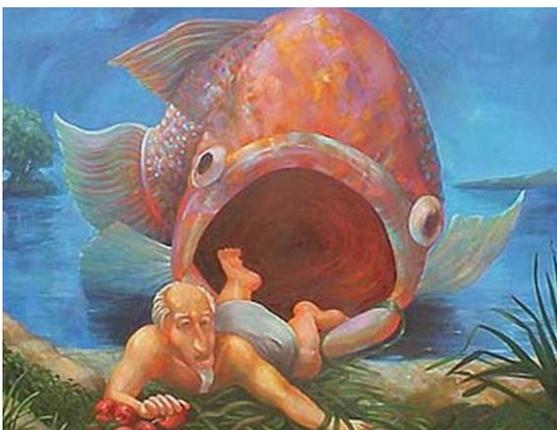
In order to respond to what we feel God has revealed to us about moving on, we have stepped back from our involvement with the Vitteaux parish. We felt we should take some 'time out' to just recharge our spiritual batteries and to prepare ourselves for the future. It is good (especially for Sharon) to be able to enjoy the experience of worship and not to be responsible for organising it!

Father Yves still invites us to do things in the parish from time to time, but we have no on-going responsibilities.

We learned last week that Father Yves has now been nominated to another parish – two parishes, in fact. He will therefore leave Somberton at the end of August for an even more rural parish further from Dijon.

It will be tough for him and his parishioners since he has been in Somberton for 11 years. The new priest will not live in the town – he too will take on responsibility for 2 parishes. So it will be difficult all round, and we would ask for your prayers for all priests as they are moved around at the end of the summer.

As part of our preparations for the future we have started to clear out our household junk in order to make any future move as easy as possible. So even books are being sorted and thrown away – yes, you read that correctly, Stephen has **THROWN BOOKS AWAY!**



Stephen has also been able to consecrate a lot of time to writing and has finally completed his "Jonah – The Epistle of Wild Grace" meditational commentary. This has now been sent to a publisher in the USA. We should hear from them in June whether they will publish this book or not. Quite a nerve-racking time! Lots of doubt and fear of failure. Lots of questions and what-ifs? However, Stephen is certain that it was God who directed him into this activity, so if publication is not the end-goal, then we will need to ask God what we are meant to do with this work.

The translation into French is still on-going and will probably take another year at least to complete. Stephen was asked to do two evenings during Lent presenting some of this Jonah material in two different parishes, and both evenings were very positive and encouraging.

Spending three days at the retreat for young people preparing their profession of faith in our group of parishes was encouraging for him and also for Caleb, who participated as a leader too. God turned up! It was great to have 13 and 14-year olds spending time in silence before God!



Caleb is waiting to find out if he can go to Dijon university in order to do his first year law course from the beginning, starting in September. He has also signed up for driving lessons and is much more positive. He is still growing and Josh may find himself the 'shortest', apart from Mum, when he returns! Caleb really enjoyed spending ten days in Scotland recently, especially being with Josh at Stirling and experiencing student life in a different context!

Josh has finished his year well. He has accommodation on campus sorted out for his fourth year and has been offered occasional work at the university play-group since he volunteered there in order to carry out some experiments! Sharon went back to Scotland just for a few days in May and it was great for her to go to his church with him. He has become an associate member and is very happy there, again involved with children's work.

Ben loves being back amongst his friends in Belfort and has done well. He came second in his year for one of his exams! He won't finish the year until July 5<sup>th</sup> and needs to focus on exams at the end of June.

Over recent months Sharon has struggled with some health problems. Her shingles has flared up again and gives her a lot of pain in her side from time to time. This seems to be exacerbated by stress and unfortunately her job is quite stressful at this time – long hours and lots of hassle; another reason why we will be glad when God opens up a new direction for us. But a physical 'MOT' thanks to the French health system ( for people who reach a special birthday! ) showed no on-going problems, praise the Lord.

Again we thank you for your prayers and financial support. Please pray for us. Please share with us anything you feel God says to you about our situation. The Lord bless you and give you grace and peace.

Stephen, Sharon, Ben, Josh and Caleb