



## MARCH NEWS NEW YEAR 2014

Dear Friends and Family,

Welcome to our New Year newsletter which (in an inspired economising ruse!) we hope you will also accept in the guise of a Christmas greeting card! We hope and pray that you have enjoyed a merry festive season and we pray a traditional “blessing upon your house” for 2014.

I’m not sure about you, but for us 2013 has been an ‘interesting’ year. Way back at the start Sharon and I felt that perhaps our time here in Villy was coming to an end and that God had another adventure in store for us. We have therefore spent this year drawing back from our involvement in the local parish and trying to discern where our future direction might lie. So far this quest remains unfulfilled. We have applied for about half a dozen different vacancies that seemed to fit with our calling, passion and experience, but as yet all of these ‘doors’ have closed very quickly. We therefore enter 2014 very much as we did 2013. Thinking our time here is drawing to an end but with no sense of where the future might lie. Could be an interesting year...!

We have had occasion to be delighted by our sons’ progress in their studies. Ben is in the final stages of his French IT engineer’s diploma (equivalent to a Masters degree) and soon begins a final 6 month placement as a System Administrator with a multinational agricultural equipment company in Strasbourg. There is a strong possibility this placement will lead to a job offer - if all goes well. We will move him (for the 6<sup>th</sup> and maybe last time!) at the beginning of February.

Joshua is also in his final year at Stirling. He looks set to graduate well and is already applying for Masters courses in developmental psychology in the UK with a view towards going on to a PhD.

Caleb is halfway through his first year of Law at Bourgogne University. He has adapted very well to living on his own in Dijon, and organising himself around a very heavy lecture schedule. He will sit competitive entrance exams in the coming months for the French ‘Police Nationale’, as this is his ultimate goal.

Some highlights for 2013 have been...



Stephen and Caleb taking part once more in a young people’s retreat with Father Yves, our previous priest. Here they are with the music group. Yes – Stephen’s guitar has made it out of the bedroom!

This 3-day retreat is an amazing time for the young people. Father Yves leads the main teaching sessions and then the young leaders (like Caleb) lead the group sessions. There has been a real sense of God’s presence in these retreats. Many of the young people and young leaders have really benefited from the experience.

This year Stephen completed the manuscript for his book on Jonah - "Jonah the epistle of wild grace". Much of this year has been spent pursuing a publication deal. Three times his manuscript has made it to final editorial selection and one offer was even received.

However complications about the foreign language rights (in view of Stephen's French translation which is nearing completion) ultimately meant that this could not go ahead. So it looks like the book will be put out via a print-on-demand service, which means it will be available to buy online at all the main vendors. In this way he retains all rights and can approach French publishers once the translation is completed.



Here he is with our friend Martine, who is helping him with the French translation.

Stephen has also been developing his writing skills through two faith-oriented blogs - an English blog [sjmarch.wordpress.com](http://sjmarch.wordpress.com) and a French blog [plusdunefoi.wordpress.com](http://plusdunefoi.wordpress.com). Reaction to these blogs has been positive.



We are very grateful to have had a family holiday twice this year! We visited the Beaujolais region in summer and went back to our favourite house in the Champagne region for Christmas with our friends the Cooks. As you can see we took the opportunity to take some family photos!!

(Ben is not really quite this tall – he is standing on a rock!)

Again we cannot express enough our appreciation for the prayers and financial support that have continued faithfully for yet another year. We are particularly grateful to the two prayer groups in Kilsyth and Burton who meet monthly to pray specifically for us. It is great to know that people still care about us and are asking God's blessing upon our work.

Hopefully this prayer letter should have been accompanied by a fridge-magnet prayer-reminder. We hope that you will place these somewhere prominent and pray for us whenever you see them!

So there we are! We hope that this finds you refreshed and ready for whatever 2014 brings along.....God bless you and yours!

*Stephen, Sharon, Benjamin, Joshua and Caleb*