



M A R C H N E W S N e w Y e a r 2 0 1 5

Dear Friends and Family,

Happy New Year 2015!!

This is something we will hear so often here in France, where the 'season' of Christmas lasts for a good few weeks to come. And yet we know that not everyone finds this time easy, and we think particularly of those among you who have lost family and friends this past year.

For us 2014 has not been so easy. You might remember that we have felt for some time our role here in our local parish was coming to an end, particularly with Father Yves leaving. We found it tough to wait for future direction, but are pleased to tell you our plans for the future have become much clearer - WE ARE MOVING BACK TO THE UK!

Over the past two years as we have been thinking about our future direction, two things really resonated with us. The first was the Fresh Expressions movement developed by the Church of England. The second was the book 'The Grace Outpouring'. Following this up we applied for a Fresh Expressions post in the Diocese of Leicester in August, which we didn't get.... but they contacted us about another post, and after an interview with the parish in October, Stephen was appointed to the post of Pioneer Community Worker for the 'Hallam Fields Project' in Birstall, just north of Leicester.

This Fresh Expressions project is really exciting; the vision is to take church to people, instead of asking people to come to church! So our role will be to live on a new housing estate and help make this happen. Things have moved really quickly; our interview was on October 28th, we are currently in the midst of packing up, and we will move to Birstall around February 9th 2015!

But before looking forward to all this will mean, we wanted to look back at some of our highlights of 2014.

We moved Ben to Strasbourg (again!) in February to start his long work placement that was the final part of his IT engineering degree. He started work with Kuhn, international specialists in agricultural machinery. They liked him and offered him a contract as a systems administrator at the end of his placement. So he began work officially with them in June. He loves Alsace, and looks set to remain there for the foreseeable future.

Early summer saw us visit Scotland briefly, in order to go to Joshua's graduation at Stirling. He obtained a First Class Honours degree in Psychology, and felt he wanted to continue his studies. He applied for one of two funded doctoral places in the department and was successful, and so is now 'on staff' at the university and up to his eyes in his research project!!

June also saw Caleb leave Dijon to go to Oissel, near Rouen, to complete basic training after successfully applying to the French police force. As we went there for his passing out parade, he seemed a changed man to us - shorter hair,

a disciplined lifestyle and epaulettes all helped make him very grown up all of a sudden!! He joined his 'brigade' here in Dijon and has a nice flat in the town centre. He works very hard on shifts, and loves his job.

Another achievement worth mentioning was the publication of Stephen's book (Jonah - the Epistle of Wild Grace) which has been 12 years in the writing!! This has been published both in English and French (Jonas - L'épître de la grâce déchaînée) It has been a labour of love, and has spurred him on to further writing projects. He is now a regular blogger in both English (fuelforpilgrims.wordpress.com) and French (plusdunefoi.wordpress.com).

The fact that Ben and Caleb are settled and enjoying life in France means that they will not be moving back to the UK with us. So we will find ourselves, 'just us two' in our new situation! This has made our last Christmas here in Villy especially meaningful, since this has been the family home where we have lived the longest. Happily we were able to have 2 nights all together in the holidays - special times, since we don't know when or where we will be all together again.

Preparing to move back the UK has presented its challenges, as you can imagine! The house we will ultimately be living in is not yet built, so we will be moving into temporary accommodation at first - in fact it's a double move! This means packing is a bit more complicated! So we have been spending time filing paperwork, sorting photos, selling a few things, organising forwarding address details etc. - and much, much more of this awaits us in the coming weeks! Stephen's favourite hobby - collecting books - has also meant that moving is a cumbersome business!

We will be sad to leave our French friends - not least those with whom we have worked both in the village and parish communities. But we are excited by this new a challenge, one we are really looking forward to - when we're not panicking!!



Our New Contact Details (including our NEW EMAIL ADDRESS) are:

email - marches@marchsite.com

post - 22 Oakfield Avenue BIRSTALL Leics. LE4 3DQ (temporary)

blogs - fuelforpilgrims.wordpress.com plusdunefoi.wordpress.com

website - www.marchsite.com

With our thanks for your prayers and support over this past year. God bless you all.

Stephen, Sharon, Ben, Josh, and Caleb