



Scene at a French baptism

Daveys in France

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Dear friends

As we write we are approaching the end of our first year in France. It seems like no time at all and a lifetime all at once, and we are very thankful to you for your faithful support and to God who has answered your prayers very richly. We can truly say that God has helped us this far. He has done great things for us.

What has happened? Well, our main task this year has been language learning. We had the privilege of doing that in the city, the church and the team where we intend to serve. The children began school immediately and we are very proud of how they have battled their way through this year and become settled. Both are moving up a class after the summer. Gwilym is going to the collège, the middle school. Both now watch French television in preference to English recorded programmes. Well, they're dubbed American programmes, but *in* French. There were lots of hurdles, but God brought us and them through them all. Alan met one of the teachers recently, who said how "impressive" was the progress that the child in her class had made.

Pat and I attended the language school attached to the Bordeaux 3 university (Arts and Letters). This brought home to us the very real opportunities of ministry amongst the students. At the language school we have studied alongside students from: Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Czech R., Germany, Iran, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Morocco, Nepal, Peru, Poland, Russia, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, USA, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yemen and, of course, Wales. We passed all our exams, thankfully, and Pat will continue at the school next year. Thank God for this. It will give valuable opportunities for continued and further witness. The courses at the school give an insight into French history, culture and literature, as well as language, and the phonetics sessions were particularly demanding and valuable. Some students from the language school attend the church we belong to.

As our French improved through the year we were able to become a little bolder in talking with the neighbours. Two highlights of this: the visit of the Mayor of Bridgend, who stayed in our road and popped in for a cup of tea, accompanied by our town counsellor neighbour, and a late night coffee with another neighbour after France's football win. Church life changed, too. Alan began manfully to battle in prayer in French early on. This led to the prayer meeting being divided into two

groups for a while – Anglophone and Francophone! But things have changed and last Sunday Alan preached for the first time. He can't remember concentrating so hard ever before, but people listened very well (they probably *had* to) and they said they'd understood and been fed from God's word. Three old friends from the language school came along, too. One is a believer, the other two not. Please pray for them, that God will open their hearts to the gospel.

One of the benefits of doing language study in Bordeaux has been to see the work and the challenges ahead. In the student work it's a time of opportunity and growth, especially among the Chinese. (Some of the Chinese students come to our church, too, and study at the language school!) Please pray for wisdom and strength for the team in reaching these people and in building the believers up in their faith. Church life in the Gironde is challenging and exciting at the same time. 30 miles north of Bordeaux two small congregations meet in satellite villages of the town of Blaye. The challenge is to build up these people and to reach the town. Meanwhile in Bordeaux the church faces major challenges: people travel in from 20 miles away or more, the lease runs out on our rented building in August 2007, this building also houses the pastor and his family, and the church is still in its very early years. Workers are few. The fields are large. There's a lot to do. Other opportunities and needs? Many bilingual or English services are being started in France to reach the anglophones, to encourage them to join in French church life and to support the French work. We are very open to be involved in this, but with our eye on the French people, you understand! And there's the possibility of further church planting in the future.

What of the more immediate future? Please pray for Pat as she continues language study. Pray for Alan as he integrates more fully into the team here. His next preaching date is August 13. (It was arranged before he preached and not cancelled afterwards!) He also hopes to continue doing some kind of study next year. Please keep praying for the children as they continue to settle into life in France. And we are house-hunting. Rents are high and rising, mortgage rates are low and stable, so we hope to get somewhere as near the children's school and the university as we can.

It is amazing to look back and see where God has brought us. Though we can't see very far ahead we have confidence that he who has led us so far will work out his will in us, for us and through us, for our good and for his glory. Thank you again for your partnership with us in reaching this great city.

Alan, Pat, Gwilym and Catrin

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