

A STEP OF FAITH

“ The end of year rush is now over, and looking back we feel encouraged.

The Christmas services were great, with a recurrence of our familiar problem: lack of space! But it's a good problem to have, especially as we think back to how slow and discouraging things were when we first arrived here in Mantes four and a half years ago! Praise God for his faithfulness.

A MAJOR CHALLENGE

In this prayer letter we want to tell you about a building project our church has just launched and which we are praying will stretch the faith of the community as well as prepare the way for the ministry to move forward. It is a major challenge and we would really value your support.

You may remember the problems of lack of space which mean that church activities regularly invade our home... (see our last prayer letter) Not only is this

difficult for us as a family, but it is desperately limiting the scope of ministry and church growth. We long to develop the children's work and to launch fresh initiatives in evangelism and practical social engagement, but we simply don't have the facilities. Any current church events involving food (Alpha, youth group...) have to use our home kitchen, which often coincides with children's bed times... I'll stop there – I think you've got the picture!

At the same time, we have next to the church a wooden building put up in the 1960s to form four meeting rooms for youth and children's work (built for the scout group at the time). But for the last 15 years at least, it has been derelict and unusable.

On Sunday 21 January, church members voted by an overwhelming majority to launch a building project to completely renovate this

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Artist's impression of the renovated building



DEAR FRIENDS...



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CROSSLINKS

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building, and to extend it to include a welcome area with toilet and basic kitchen facilities.

We are really excited by this step of faith – it will open the doors for the life and witness of the church to grow in the years to come. But it represents a major challenge. **The overall budget for the work is set at 200,000 euros** (about £133,000), whereas the total yearly budget for our church is only 50,000 euros! What is more, we hope to launch the building work this summer (beginning in July), so there is very little time to find the money.

Current plan (below), with church (centre), our house (left) and disused building (right). Detail on right shows proposed renovation and extension.



We really believe that the Lord is in this project, and so we are confident that he will provide the money... but we are really praying that the project itself will enable members of the church to step forward together in faith.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Firstly, please pray for spiritual depth and growth to come to the church through this project. Pray that members of the church will learn about prayer, giving and priorities. Pray that their faith will grow as they see God provide. Pray that this project will mobilise the community and help people to leave behind the consumer mentality which is a constant opposition to spiritual commitment here.

Secondly, please consider a practical gift toward the project. Crosslinks have set up a special fund and any gifts should be sent to them (cheques made out to 'Crosslinks'), and clearly marked 'Bucklers building project'. Whatever the size of your gift, we – and our church – will be grateful for your partnership.

Thirdly, you may consult the plans for the project, together with the brochure which has been prepared for church members, and a pastoral letter which Andy has written to all church members (in French) on our homepage on the Crosslinks website.

We will keep you informed with progress and thank you in advance for your help!



The children during the Christmas holidays

FAMILY NEWS

The children are all doing well – Samuel had a successful ear operation in December and is now learning to play the trumpet (no link between the two...!). Soon no doubt he'll be able to join Thomas, who plays drums from time to time in church services... Both seem to be fine at school. Daniel and Loïs are growing fast (Loïs will be two at the end of March... how time flies!) and all the



Us in front of our church!

boys are learning that they need to watch their ways with a sister who knows what she wants! In November, Uta began teaching English one day a week in some local primary schools here. It's good for her to have a focus away from the family and church, and is putting her in contact with fresh people, but tiredness is a constant problem.

Andy is busily preparing to do a day's teaching a week at the Protestant theology Institute in Paris from March. This is the theological institute which trains all pastors in the French

Reformed Church, and we see this as a God-given opportunity to input into the training of future pastors. In addition, he continues to be active on the editorial committee of *Perspectives Missionnaires*, a French speaking international review of mission (www.perspectives-missionnaires.org). Please pray for energy and balance – especially in juggling ministry challenges and family life.

Thank you for your support – we are really grateful !

With much love,

*Uta
Andy*

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