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Dear friends

As I watch our daughter Lois dip the baby Jesus in her chocolate sauce dessert, I feel she really has begun to understand some of the essence of Christmas (well, Jesus, chocolate, and the like – if you know what I mean.) We hope that you find the time to enjoy the simplicity of what happened at Christmas so many years ago (and I am *not* going to say the ‘sweetness’ of the message because that would just pushing it too far..) Anyway, what we *really* want to say is happy Christmas to you all!



*before... and after !*

### Building project

We have had a very busy summer and autumn. The practical side of our building project started the last week of May and went on until August, with the construction of the new, and the destruction of the old building (in that order, for legal reasons...). The members of the church painted and tiled the entire building during the months of September and October, and we were able to start using the building at the beginning of November. The partition walls will hopefully be installed by Christmas and we have kept the fitting of the kitchen area for 2008 – uff, it *has* been busy!

For those who are interested, there are more photos of the building work on the Crosslinks website.

Financially, we feel a miracle has taken place. Over 200,000 euros have been given to the project. We have been able to honour all the bills and we are confident that we will be able to repay the loans given to us in the next 18 months, thanks to the generosity of church members, the French Reformed Church and our friends abroad. Thank you all so much for your generous support – some of your gifts have quite taken our breath away, and have been an enormous encouragement to the church here. There have been anxious times but, looking back, we are amazed at God's faithfulness.

### Church life

Spiritually we feel that the building has given the church a real boost. Many have seen for the first time that a step of faith actually ‘works’

and that it is possible to trust God for practical things. At the same time, it really feels like the project has given the church a fresh dynamic in its spiritual life: church services on a Sunday are fuller than ever, and we sense real joy as people come together to worship.

Andy has just finished a sermon series on the ten commandments, which has also contributed to the spiritual dynamic over the last few months and brought a number of issues to the surface, not least concerning marriage, where we have become aware of a number of couples in difficulty. We are going to run the Marriage Course from February 2008 and would value your prayers for this.

We are coming to the end of another Alpha course which has been challenging and rewarding with about 20 participants (the largest so far), many of whom have come from outside the church – really encouraging.

On a different note, the Reformed Church has a process of re-evaluation of each pastor during the sixth year of his ministry in a church. In October, it was Andy's turn to be 'judged' by the Reformed Church and his PCC, who voted unanimously in favour of him staying on. Even though we had expected this, it was still very affirming and a reminder to us of how much things have changed since we arrived.

It is encouraging to note that change is afoot too in the Reformed Church more widely. The regional synod in November was on the



theme of evangelism, with practical workshops for the first time (one of which Andy led)... Andy is getting asked frequently to lead seminars on the Alpha course, or on evangelism. We really do sense a fresh openness and we are praying that it will prove to be a precursor to a fresh move of God's Spirit in and through the Reformed Church in France.

As we look to 2008, we are praying for a fresh dynamic in evangelism. The church will be welcoming a team from Wycliffe Hall in Oxford for a week of mission leading up to Easter, which we are excited about (more about that in the next letter). At the same time, we are often discouraged by the fall-off rate of people who, having found faith, don't seem able to step into mature discipleship. It feels like they are robbed of the seed that has been planted. I'm sure there's a parable about that somewhere... In any case, do pray with us that evangelism and discipleship will go hand in hand.

### Family news

Survival is the word that comes to mind! I would struggle to give you a list of all the great achievements of our various (well, four,) offspring, but rest assured that they are all alive and kicking; eating for England (well, France actually) and dreaming of a life without school. (When on earth will that be, I wonder, but don't dare tell them.) They are all involved in activities outside school – sport or music, and general mischief for Loïs (strangely she doesn't need an organised activity to be good at that). We are totally bemused as to where they all get their energy from... In any case, one thing is sure: the Buckler family is full of life!

We are so grateful for your prayers and support. May God bless and enrich you this Christmas time and in the year ahead.

Much love from

Andy and Uta

