



Andy & Uta Buckler
12 rue de Gassicourt
78200 MANTES LA JOLIE
01 30 33 07 95
andy.buckler@free.fr
uta.buckler@free.fr



SEPTEMBER 2008

Dear friends

When we arrived in Mantes in 2002, someone wisely told us not to overestimate what we could do in six months, and not to underestimate what God could do in six years. As we start our seventh year here in Mantes la Jolie, it is time to take stock once more. We have had a refreshing and challenging time this year at New Wine (if muddy...) and feel challenged not to hold back or get distracted with our own future before our time here has finished.

A year of changes

We have seen many positive changes this last year. The new building next to the church has been a constant reminder of God's goodness, faithfulness and generosity towards us. The formal opening ceremony was held in February in the presence of the Maire of Mantes and the President of the Paris region of the Reformed church. The whole project has thrown our church upon God and as we have seen things coming together, so people's faith levels have risen. It really seems to have given a fresh spiritual dynamic to the church. Here are a few of the main points that have encouraged us since then.

A fresh dynamic

- In February/March we ran our first Marriage course, with five couples. A very positive experience for us all.
- In March, AGM elections signalled a change in the composition of the PCC. With three new members - motivated and committed – the PCC is really becoming a place of vision and prayer. We have come a long way, praise God!
- Also in March, we welcomed a team from Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, who came to help us run a week of evangelism in the week leading up to Easter. The French love a good meal and a good discussion, so we encouraged people to host dinner parties for non-christian friends or neighbours, with some of our English guys as special guests. It was a good formula! Around 10 meals were organised which reached people, some of whom had never had contact with church before. Later in the week there were different themed evenings and a children's afternoon. All the events were well attended, but the main thing that struck us was the variety of people that came. The diversity of our church community really has amazing evangelistic potential... The week concluded with a special Easter service which we held in the catholic church since our own building was far too small. Around 250 people came (including children) – it was a rich and encouraging experience for the whole church. Thank you so much to the Wycliffe team.



the Wycliffe team prove that they can sing...

- After the week of evangelism we launched a fresh Alpha course, with 10-15 participants. Over 70 people have now participated in a course since we launched them in 2005. There is no doubt that Alpha has contributed in a major way to the renewal of the church here...
- In June, we organised a church weekend for the first time – 70 people took part. Each time something new is launched, it feels like we take a step forward.



participants at the church weekend

A wider vision

In May, Andy was able to attend a two-week conference for French (reformed) church leaders in South Korea. It was an intense, tiring and enriching time! It was a real gift from the Lord to be part of the French delegation and to see from the inside how God gave vision and instil faith to the whole French team. We came back really *believing* that God could act in the ERF and in France...

Andy also completed another semester of teaching at the theological faculty in Paris, where he continues to have opportunities to input into the training of future ERF pastors. He also finally managed to edit his MA thesis for publication as a book (in French) on Calvin and the mission of the church. It is being published in October. Do pray that it breathes life into dry bones! Watch this space...

We were blessed to be joined for three months by an English student from March to July – Jen was a fantastic support to us all, and with her gentle touch very quickly won the hearts of all the old folk in the church! It was sad to see her leave (to continue her studies at Oxford), but we are excited that we will be able to welcome a young couple Ben and Rachel for a year from September. They are coming as part of a Crosslinks SMILE project and we are looking forward to their arrival. Do pray that they settle in quickly.



Jen with Loïs

Family news

In the middle of all this, we were surprised to find out that we are expecting another baby. We admit that it has taken a bit of time to get used to this news. Mind you, we had a number of encouraging words over the summer, notably from parents and children issued from large families. In any case, we appreciate your prayers... The baby is due in December.

In conclusion, our desire for this coming year is two-fold: To keep 'running the race as to win the prize', and to take our church deeper, further, and into greater maturity. God knows how we are going to do this! Please pray with us that we learn as a church to be sensitive to his guidance and to walk in his power.

We are grateful for your support and prayers – especially since we are not very regular prayer letter writers... In an attempt to improve communication with you, we have now set up a blog which we will try and keep up to date with information and prayer points, etc. Please visit it and let us know what you think!

Address: <http://andybuckler.blogspot.fr/>

With much love, as ever

Andy and Uta



Left to right :
Preparing and enjoying
the church kermesse (1-3),
teamwork on the weekend
(4), the Korean
delegation (5)

