

Spring 2019



Bonjour !

Time runs out but work never does. Though, it is not about time or work, though we need the time and we need to work, right? I am now in my 50th year. Often people think of those in their 20s or 30s to be in the height of their life... well it all depends on how we understand life. One thing has become clear to me: Life is about knowing God and one another. Knowing God is eternal life. Knowing one another is essential to who we are. Though there is much to do, and time is very short, I realize that being with God and with each other is so much more important than all that we can ever accomplish. Don't get me wrong, I love to accomplish things. But to see a person transformed by Jesus Christ does not compare to huge buildings and empires! And there is nothing better than knowing God and being known by Him! It is in this intimacy *with* Him that we are transformed and that what we do *with* Him that brings forth fruit.

So, what should I write about? About the church's building renovation that we finally are allowed to do after all these years or about the people being transformed?



We'll keep the best for last. The renovation work has started and will be done bit by bit, as people are available and as the work gets organized during the next two years. A small group of Dutch people was supposed to come and help us at the end of the February to do a part of it. A good excuse to push things forward. As usual, things hardly ever go as planned! As the first couple arrived in Tours two days before starting, they had learned that another couple had to stay home because of illness. The next day, another man, named Jan, was to arrive. As he arrived, the couple shared a meal with him and then handed the keys of the house to him and left to return to the Netherlands for a funeral... Needless to say, we did less than planned, but we did get on with the work. Fortunately, Jan is a very experienced builder and came equipped with his professional tools. He worked well and hard. We got extra help from a fellow church planter who has also his own business as a joiner/mason. Together with some help from the church, we were able to do almost as much as planned. Now, we have to do the finishing.



At the same time, at home we have (finally!) redone our guestroom/my office so that Jan-Willem could get his own room after 13 years of sharing a room with Jack. This means that we really need to get going with the renovations and provide an office for the pastor! 😊

January is the month that people wish each other "bonne année", a good year, and most of all: health. Now some add happiness as well. The French do this around the table and a piece of "galette des rois", a traditional almond filled cake. So mid-January, some 160 people came to the building, known as sale



Jan-Willem on his way to Germany

ATN, to have a good time. Even the Mayor of Tours came, along with some deputy mayors. Interesting enough the VIP table was right at the feet of the cross. Now, this celebration was not organized by our church but by the non-Christian charity organization “Maison de la Solidarité”. Normally, people don’t walk into a church, especially an evangelical church like ours. They might go into an old church, like tourists.



160 people having a good time in “church”

The “Maison de la Solidarité” is not the only organization to use our facilities. Every month doctors and nurses come and use the premises to collect blood for the hospitals. This is possible because the building is not like a “church” and has been used to serve the public, which we hope to continue.

There are not enough or many halls rentable to people, clubs, and organizations in our part of town. So, there is an opportunity to overcome suspicion and to make connection with those who would otherwise shy away from anything churchy.

We just celebrated Easter, or rather the atoning sacrifice and the resurrection of Jesus. A great opportunity to have fellowship and inviting people to join us. And many did. What encouraged me is that Jackie came. He is a local and a volunteer from the “Maison de la Solidarité”. I have

no idea if and what he believes. But he came this time. People observe how we live and interact with others. So, pray that as we “move into the neighborhood” that we can incarnate the Word of God in such a manner that it will glorify our Heavenly Father.

One of the consequences of living out the Gospel of Jesus is that people desire to be freed from sin. And what a joy when people walk in newfound grace and freedom of Christ. Driven by the Word and the Spirit of God, Francis decided to confide his drinking problem to me. We talked, we prayed. It seemed a moderate problem, bothersome but nothing too seriously. We talked so more, and prayed. And one time, as he drove me to the train station, I suggested he’d see a specialized center near his home. He did right away and got an appointment on the spot and was tested. The verdict was hard: alcoholic. His wife had a hard time believing it. But Francis had already told me: “It is better to go to heaven with one eye than to hell with two.” After his appointment, he asked me: “Do you like wine? I have bottles to give away!” Well, I have a “drinking problem”, I don’t like wine! Now six months down the road, Francis is still “dry” and very happy. He says that he has more opportunities to witness to friends and colleagues. His boss has given him Friday afternoons off so he can dedicate more time to serving God!



Thank you so much for helping to make this possible through your prayers, encouragements, and support!

*Marc & Jody,
Jan-Willem, and Jack*



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