



Chambéry, July 2017

Dear friends.

We hope you are doing well.

Protecting the Flock

Wolves had been wiped out from France, the last one being killed in 1937. But in the early 1990s, some wolves crossed the border from Italy where the wolf population had grown. They eventually settled in the Southern French Alps, and since then the population of wolves has rapidly grown and they have expanded their territory to several rural parts of France. The most recent study estimates that there are between 250 and 300 wolves on the French territory. It is a major source of worries for farmers. Wolves attack flocks on a regular basis, especially during the summer season. Some farmers use special dogs called patou to protect their flocks. It often works and wolves won't attack a flock protected by a patou. But these dogs bring problems of their own as they will defend their flocks not only against wolves but also against anyone they see as a threat, like.... hikers.

In recent months, we have become more and more aware that wolves are on the loose in and around churches. Of course this is not new, and our Lord himself had warned his disciples against false prophets, who come to us in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves (Matthew 7:15). But like French shepherds who had lost the habit of being on their guards against predators attacking their flocks, church leaders can sometimes let their guard down.

Like most churches, we sometimes receive visitors who are wolves in sheep clothing. In a big church, they may go unnoticed and leave without creating havoc. But in a small church, they can cause a lot of problems in little time. One of the problems is that these false teachers often use social media to pass their message, and it is impossible to control everything our members will read and listened to over the week. The only solution is to know our flock well, to preach and teach the word so that they will spot false teachings when they see them.

Pray for Emmanuel and his fellow elder, Jean-Pierre, as they protect the flock against those wolves in sheep clothing who may mislead some of our members. One such man is the father of some children in the primary school we attend. He came to one of our services several months ago. He hasn't come back, and doesn't attend any church; but he is regularly pushing to have some of our folks follow him on the streets of Chambéry to do some "evangelism". Emmanuel has spoken with him several times, and it has become clear that he is a disciple of Torben Sondergaard, a Danish "evangelist" and faith healer whose gospel message is rather doubtful. Pray for Emmanuel as he talks with this man. Pray especially for wisdom and that this man will come to understand the biblical gospel.

On the church front

The last few months have been busy. There is something to prepare most weeks: sermons, Bible study, Sunday school, reading and lectures for the Belgium Bible Institute... Emmanuel has been preaching twice a month recently, preaching in Cognin each month, but also twice in Grenoble, and once in Bourgneuf. He will only be preaching in Cognin for the rest of the summer. Emmanuel has also met with some of the church members, and it has been good to get to know them better.

The church is going through some difficulties. One long standing member recently resigned following a conflict with another member. But he refused to resolve this conflict and eventually left. The other member had approached him several times to find a solution, and the council also. Obviously, it sent shockwaves through the membership who were not aware of the conflict. It was a good opportunity to get people to speak. We would ask you to continue to pray that we will all be united, and that this unity will be deeply rooted in the gospel. Pray also that we will learn the lessons to be

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learned. If the council, or the whole church made a mistake in the whole process, we want to learn from these. Pray also for this brother who decided to leave.

In spite of these problems, we welcomed 5 new members in our AGM: Atilio and Janine, an elderly couple who joined us a while ago after their fellowship in Aix Les Bains closed its doors; David and Magali that I have mentioned before; Sarah, a young woman working in the local hospital. Another couple would like to join but it will have to wait a while. Our Sunday services continue to be well attended. We pray that the preaching will be powerful and that people will grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord.

Church projects and teaching

One of the major projects for September will be to organise and start some home groups. We've identified 3 zones where church members live and hope to be ready to start at the end of September. We also would like the church to support the Student work more actively and are looking for ways for members to be more involved in the lives of the students attending this work. We would also like to start something for our teenagers.

Emmanuel's first trip to Brussels is on 28th June. He will teach Early Church History and a new course on cults. He still has some work to do over the summer.

Continue to pray for Christian and Geraldine. Christian especially doesn't understand that justification is by faith alone. He always wants to add his own works to his salvation. David and Magali are still struggling with Magali's teenage daughter. They are a great couple and need much support through this trial. We see François and Samantha on a regular basis and always have interesting chats, but pray that we will take every opportunity to share the gospel with them. Pray for Jenny, the 31 year old daughter of someone we know. We heard recently that she has some serious psychiatric problems and may have to spend some time in hospital. She has an 8 year old boy.

Family news

We made a quick trip to the South of England at the end of May to celebrate Esther's mum and dad's 50th wedding anniversary with her family but we will be staying in France for the rest of the summer. We are travelling to Toulouse for a family reunion on 15th July. After this we will spend some time in the family chalet in the Alps. We are looking forward to do some walking and rock climbing as a family. After this, we will attend a Reformed Baptist family conference where Emmanuel will speak on the origins of the Reformation. Stuart Olyott will also be one of the speakers as well as some other brothers from Switzerland.

Emmanuel's health is stable. He saw the consultant a few weeks ago and will see him again in October. Esther and the children are doing well. They finished school on 7th July. Clémence will start school in September and Benjamin will move up to the primary school.

Thank you for your prayers. We hope you have a good summer and a well deserved rest.

Emmanuel, Esther, Jean-Baptiste, Maxime, Benjamin, Clémence.

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