

Autumn 2020



Bonjour !

People are wearing masks all day long, at work, at school, at church, in the stores, and even in the streets. Nothing new really. People have been wearing masks for ages. However, God sees the heart of each one of us. But besides wearing a mask behind they hope to hide, people are wearing masks because of fear, though some also out of respect and carefulness. We live in a crazy world, rather a fallen world who desperately needs Jesus.

Lockdown is behind us for almost six months now. The limiting people to meet in church (or to meet all together in church) has been deemed unconstitutional. Indeed, in France, it is still unconstitutional to limit or to forbid people to worship God. A very interesting fact for a secular country. There are countries where religious (and political) freedom it is not a constitutional right. It is part of the universal human rights. Freedom to believe or not to believe. Though, it's a freedom with an expiration date (see Hebrew 9.27-28). Since mid-July, people have to wear a mask in public building (like churches) and in touristic outdoor places. In middle schools, kids have to wear a mask on campus all day. So, our boys, Jan-Willem and Jack, have to wear a mask.

Unfortunately, the end of lockdown is far from the end of the present crises. Since our first Sunday service on Pentecostal day, church life has not gone back to normal and has a hard time to find a "new normal". During the first few months, anywhere between 10 and 20 people showed up. With school starting up again, and the kids' clubs, families with children are coming back again, but not in the same numbers. And we still "Zoom"! Though, on September 13, we started singing again with musicians playing live. Until then we sang karaoke style with prerecorded songs. Live is much better. Even though Zoom has been helpful, it does not replace real fellowship and physical contact. After an initial "success", people have now "zoomed out", and some completely.



Leading a church service during vacation in our car

Interestingly, new people have showed up as well. But church is not about numbers or programs. Church is God's family. We meet to celebrate God's goodness and greatness. And we share life together, for better and for worse. It is hard, because we are broken people. But praise be to God, we are also a redeemed people. And now we have the privilege to learn to love one another, with our ups and downs!

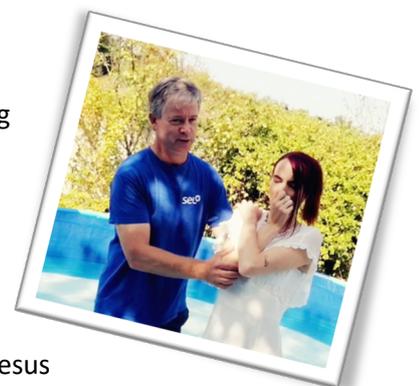


Marla giving her testimony

Let me tell you about Marla, a young woman in her early thirties. In February, she started a preparation course for baptism within the Catholic church. At one point the priest mentioned "protestants" which triggered her curiosity. So right after the lockdown mid-May, she called the closet church to her place and we met one afternoon talking

about Protestantism and the Bible. Another meeting followed on how protestants understand baptism. At the end she said: "I think I want to be baptized protestant. It resonates more with me." "Wow, that goes a bit fast!" I thought. I wasn't sure what to think of it. So, I proposed we'd go through the letter of Paul to the Romans and suggested she'd read the first two chapters. And she did, the whole letter twice! So far, we have done the first 11 chapters.

Meanwhile, she has finished the New Testament. About a year ago, somehow Jesus made Himself known to her, by saying "I'm here." That was all she needed to hear. She turned from worshipping Mary and Fatima to worship Jesus. Early August, she brought a friend along. We had a



very long conversation on the Gospel. While her friend didn't know where he stood as to his salvation or what he would answer God about his life, for Marla it was crystal clear! Because of Jesus, she has eternal life! And so, on Sunday September 13, we had the great joy of baptizing her.

Another great story is the church in Saintes which I have had the privilege of serving over the last five or six years. At the beginning of September, we had a belated General Assembly. It was also our first "physical" meeting. And we had reason to celebrate. Not only were we able to appoint a brand-new church council after three years of not having one, we also nominated a volunteer pastor! It was all rather unexpected and in spite of a "shut down" of the church for over six months. This means that my monthly visits will be reduced to about three per year for the next two years as I will help the church to transition. For me, this is a great blessing. In the beginning, when I would arrive, people would tell of their grievances with one another. But since our "Sunday of jubilee" two and



Church meeting in Saintes

half years ago, peace and love settled in. The church started to grow, and not only in fellowship, and on top of that no more gossip and complaints!

Since we have a relatively "neutral" building for the church, and because of the sanitary restrictions, different association and organizations have asked us if they could rent our building. A rather interesting way to bring people in contact with the church through a simple building that desperately needs to have the renovation work finished! So, in the next weeks, most of my time will be doing just that.



Leader the General Assembly of a local charity with the presence of city council member

Meanwhile, we are working hard on encouraging people to grow in their trust in Christ and in fellowship. Spread out and saturated city slickers have a hard time to invest in fellowship, in reading the Bible, and in prayer. Please pray that we may grow in authentic Christ-like brotherly love. This is what we desperately need in this time of "social distancing" and "social craziness".

Please pray also for Vincent and Michel that both of these men will come to know Christ, as well as Jody's friend F. and her family.



Sharing the Gospel during scouts outing

Thank you so much for partnering with us through prayer and financial support. We are really grateful for your involvement in our lives and ministries! May our Lord Jesus bless you with His peace and joy!

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