

June 2009

Dear Christian friends and family,

Just a few days ago, the "King of Pop" died suddenly. I'm thinking that not one person reading this letter is unaware of that news, as it has saturated the news media ever since. (By the way, did any of the so-called "mediums" announce this in advance? I don't think so!) I'm also thinking that, if I were to be called the "king" of something, would I want it to be "pop"? Well, perhaps I should be more indulgent. I'll have to admit that I liked some of his songs (especially the rhythms), even if I did not approve of some of his moves and attitudes. This man was a musical and performing genius, OK. He was a source of inspiration for artists and fans all over the world, OK. But, this man was his own god, as well as that of his fans. However, he was not able to successfully assume the weight of his own "divinity". His great wealth not only did not sustain him, but it would appear that, at least in part, it finally killed him. In spite of his talent and his fame, he was a man like any other, and he died, as all men will. So what lessons can we learn from him? To pursue with energy what seems to be our best path in life. This seems right. But to always look above us — not in ourselves or in any man — to find our God. To know that neither fabulous fame nor world-class wealth can save us. And, that we should be thinking about more than "pop". I like Jesus' words in another context but that certainly apply here: "Heaven and earth [including "pop" and the rest - CW] shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). Forget Michael Jackson? Probably not. But, at least, let's keep him in his context — and move on.

When you saw this letter in your in-box (or your mailbox), did you say: "I didn't get a letter from the Whites last month" ? Well, you're right, and there's a good reason for that: I didn't write one. Normally, I decide each year which month will be the "off" month, and I tell you about it in advance. This time, just as I was teaching about how to handle the "unexpected", an urgent family matter arose in the States, and we decided to go spend a few days to work some of it out. We'll be going back in August, also, for the same reason. As most of you know by now, this means that our planned reporting trip in September-October has had to be postponed. I'm working on new dates, and will be contacting many of you soon about that. Meanwhile, we covet your prayers for our family. And we appreciate your love expressed in this way.

In May, then, we held a seminar on the importance of the family in our society. Mark Kee from Geneva (we like to say "the Marquis of Geneva") came to teach this seminar. Mark is one of the newly-selected elders of the Geneva congregation. His wisdom in family matters was evident, and we learned a lot. There were two visitors from the community.

Also in May, the French-speaking Churches held their annual family retreat. The theme this year was "Jesus reveals". I spoke on "Jesus reveals evil". My study on this subject came around to the idea that the greatest evil that Jesus revealed was that of unbelief — in His person (who He was), in His messiahship (the reason for His coming), in His death (its saving power). I really think that Christians are as unbelieving in some aspects as were the Jews whose unbelief crucified our Lord. If we really — really and truly — believed in Him, would the Church be struggling as it is today? Just wondering.

In May, lastly, Tia and Jeff came over from Padova, Italy, with their daughter Ameleah. Tia is expecting their second child toward the end of July, and she came for the duration, since she will be having the baby here in Lyon. Jeff returned to Padova for a few days and has come back, he too for the duration. It has been a little over a month now, and Tia is doing very well. She is at a doctor's appointment as I write this, and I think that most of her preliminary doctor visits are now over. In the beginning of Tia's pregnancy, there were occasional indications that this child might not go all the way to term, so the doctors recommended she get as much rest as she could, right up to the "birthday". So, that is what she is trying to do. We're enjoying having the three Brauers here and are looking forward to welcoming a fourth, shortly.

In June, the McCready group from Harding came to spend a few days with the Church here. Robert and Sylva McCready, who worked as missionaries in Toulouse for many years, have been leading a group of Harding French students to Europe for several years now, to travel around edifying congregations in France, Belgium and Switzerland. In Lyon, the group did some distribution for Bible correspondence courses and a short vacation Bible school for our youngsters. As always, they were a real encouragement to us.

In June, the men of the congregation held our annual "planning" meeting for the congregation. In preparation for this annual meeting, members receive a questionnaire entitled "Opinions et Suggestions". The men's discussions and decisions are based on the answers provided by this questionnaire. There were no major changes this year, but we are facing a new, "pesky" problem. As you probably know, our meeting place is in an apartment complex, which is entered via a passageway under a building that faces the street. Recently, the apartment owners in the complex installed a gateway that closes up the property entirely. Of course, we were able to get some automatic gate and door openers, but not for every member. And then, there is the problem of visitors. At present there is a button on the gate that rings our phone, so that we can open the gate from the inside. But a phone ringing during classes or worship services is certainly not ideal. We have succeeded in getting the owners to allow the pedestrian door to be left open from 9:00 to 12:00 A. M. on Sundays, but this does not entirely solve our problem. Perhaps the time has come for us to be looking seriously elsewhere. I'll keep you informed on that.

July and August are slow months, as many of the French (including many of our members) are gone on vacation. We continue our regular meetings, of course, but do not plan any major outreach efforts, at least not collective ones. Our members are encouraged not to take a vacation from the Lord, and to be always talking about Him to friends and acquaintances — even during travels.

We had a great visit with the Brad Stinson family in early June. Brad is my "nephew by marriage," the husband of my niece, Dawn White Stinson. The Stinsons are a real encouragement to Pam and me (and to Tia and Jeff) in our work in Europe. Another visitor, Kathy Tek, leaves Lyon today after a too-short visit. We didn't get to spend much time with her this time. Maybe when she comes back ....

That's about it for this time. We send you our love and best wishes. And, again, we ask for your prayers for our whole family. May the Lord bless you, today!

Sincerely,

Charles and Pam