

# Transformed



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A newsletter of TMS Global



As they care for a famous manor, God has given Mike and Valerie Smith favor with people in the nearby town. The Smiths are building relationships with non-Christian friends and finding opportunities to share God's love.

## A place of rest

**In the heart of Brittany, France, Mike and Valerie Smith set tables and serve helpings of rest, peace, and light.**

### A grand house

About 300 miles west of Paris, in the center of the Brittany region of France, stands a three-story stone manor house.

Over the past 410 years it's been home to lords, ladies, their servants, and in the 1960s and 70s, a famous Breton singer.

Today it's inhabited by Mike and Valerie Smith and guests who stay at Le Manoir Du Poul Coeur de Bretagne Bed & Breakfast. Some are tourists, others

are cross-cultural witnesses (CCWs) who come for rest and rejuvenation.

### An answer to prayer

The Smiths have been in Brittany for more than two decades. They had served in France years before and were looking for an opportunity to move back.

"We felt strongly that God spoke to our hearts saying, 'You will return to France, but next time it will be with a job,'" Mike says.

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Valerie has served dinner to French chefs around her table, without realizing it until later. “They ended up wanting one of my recipes that I made. So that was fun,” Valerie says.

It was an answer to prayer when friends purchased the manor house and offered the Smiths the role of property managers.

That’s how Valerie, an artist, and Mike, a musician who used to work in a bank, found themselves running a B&B.

## Learning to serve

The Smiths make the beds in rooms decorated in bright whites, light blues, soft yellows, and neutral tones.

In the kitchen, a load of laundry tumbles in the washing machine, while a sink-full of dishes fills with soapy water.

“I even like to wash dishes now,” Mike says. “Before moving to France, I just dreaded it. And that was just for our little family. Now we’re doing it for groups, and we love it. We don’t have a dishwasher. It’s all by hand. So it’s funny how we evolve.”

In the dining room, wooden beams run across the ceiling, connecting one stone wall to another. The space is decorated with Valerie’s artwork. Jars of homemade jam sit on the windowsill. A large stone fireplace occupies much of one wall, its mantle reaching nearly to the ceiling.

“I didn’t even know how to set a table properly before we came here,” Valerie says. “In my family, we just put out stuff. It didn’t matter. Just plop it on the table. I had

to learn. It always made me nervous at the beginning, but now it just comes naturally.”

When Valerie and Mike lived in the United States, they didn’t have people over often because she was always nervous about what to make, and afraid her guests wouldn’t like it.

“I can’t believe how many hundreds of people we feed every year now,” she says.

Valerie notes she had to learn to stop being self-conscious and remember that serving is not about her.

“It’s all about meeting their needs and making it wonderful for the guests and just doing my very best to make it as nice and as good as possible for them,” Valerie says. “They’re not there to judge me. That freed me up to serve and concentrate on blessing them. I think that changed me. We love the service.”

Mike adds, “I never thought we were hospitable before, but well, it turns out we are.”

And then there’s the yardwork.

The Bed & Breakfast is surrounded by 30 acres of woods. The Smiths maintain the lawn and flower beds. The birds love it here.

“I worship when I’m working in nature,” Valerie says. “It’s the most amazing thing, and it makes me feel so good, like we are accomplishing something that God wants us to do. And I think, *but it’s just gardening*. And yet I feel such a sense of pleasure that God is happy with me for taking care of His ground.”

The Smiths serve people from all over the world who come to the B&B on holiday. But they also serve CCWs who need rest and restoration.

“And they love it because it’s so peaceful,” Mike says.

## A light in a dark region of France

Mike says serving CCWs keeps him encouraged. In this region of France, he says, it’s easy for Christian workers to want to give up. Though each town in Brittany has a Catholic church, many are closed. Protestant Christians are few and far between.

“Most communities don’t have one single Christian living in it,” Mike says. “But there are communities





Valerie and Mike Smith say it's clear that God put every detail of their lives in France together. "We couldn't have dreamed up this whole scenario with the ministry," Mike says. "It's just so obvious that God did it. It was a miracle." Valerie adds, "We know we're in the right place."

that might have one or a family, and so they have to search. They're just scattered."

The Smiths helped plant a church in their area.

"And once we started that, a few more hidden Christians came out of the woodwork and appeared," Mike says. "So maybe we're just trying to establish something there to be a light and draw more people. But it is difficult. A lot of French people prefer to be atheist."

The Smiths continue to build relationships in their community. Valerie is in an artist group, and Mike plays in a band.

In the daily grind of caring for the manor house, its grounds, and the guests who come to enjoy them, it can be hard to see the fruit of ministry.

Valerie notes, "I often think, what am I really accomplishing when all I'm doing is cleaning rooms and weeding and all of that. You can wonder, *am I really doing the right thing*, you know? And yet, no, I know I am. God put us here."

Mike adds, "When we lived in Texas, I worked in a bank with my white shirt and tie. I can't even picture that now. I'm a completely different person."

*By Jenifer Jones*



Visit the Le Manoir Du Paul Couer de Bretagne Bed & Breakfast website here!

[bretagnebb.com](http://bretagnebb.com)

## Made for this

In Brittany, France, TMS Global cross-cultural witnesses Mike and Valerie Smith live out an extraordinary calling. They tend to a 410-year-old manor, run a B&B, care for Christian workers, and are planting a church in an area considered one of the most spiritually dark in France.

Through the endless daily tasks—preparing meals, cleaning rooms, caring for 30 acres of grounds—they say that they feel God's pleasure. It's like they were made for this.

In 28 countries, TMS Global cross-cultural witnesses serve in ministries almost as varied as each individual or family—you might say, work for which they seem fashioned.

It's amazing to listen to God's people, the unique longings to serve Him that God puts in hearts. Thank you for saying yes to the calling God has put in yours. You are making a difference in so many lives.

Through your partnership with TMS Global, you are serving cross-cultural witnesses, helping them discern and implement their callings. And Jesus is being made known throughout the world.

I pray today you sense God's pleasure.



*Max A. Wilkins*

Max Wilkins  
President & CEO



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*Now* *Then,*  
*You*

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1972



2021

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