

action

Missionnaire



Inside this Edition

New church plant in Descartes

Update on the M9 church

Student outreach in Brittany



500 years of Reformation

Reflections by Dr Paul Cooke, FM's British Director

As you probably know, 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of **Martin Luther nailing his 95 Theses** to the door of a church in Wittenberg, thus igniting the movement that would come to be known as the Reformation. Earlier this year, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York issued a joint statement saying that: "Remembering the Reformation should bring us back to what the Reformers wanted to put at the centre of every person's life, which is **a simple trust in Jesus Christ.**" Amen to that! Amen too to the statement issued by the Evangelical Alliance: "we give thanks that Luther's witness to the **primacy of biblical authority** and the **centrality of justification by grace through faith** did so much to shape our identity as evangelicals."



The anniversary is being celebrated in France too – perhaps even more overtly than here in the UK. The CNEF (National Council of French Evangelicals) has created a helpful website called **Merci pour la Bible** (mercipourlabible.com), containing several useful resources, including FM's mobile exhibition that allows viewers to connect with the biblical story via great works of art. Using the **visual arts** as a way of introducing French

friends to God's Story is an approach used by a number of FM churches, as you'll see from the reports on Blois-Centre and Le Pré Saint Gervais in this issue.

There is something of an irony here, since a number of the early Reformers were strongly opposed to the presence of images in churches! However, while valuing the heritage of the Reformation, France Mission wants to be open to God's leading in terms of the most effective ways of **sharing the gospel today**. Hence the experiments in "multisite churches" that you can read about in this issue with *Réactif* (L'Église M9 & L'Église de la Brie) and also, in a different way, with the Descartes-Loches connection. May the Lord richly bless these and other initiatives as part of His Kingdom-building work in France.

Every blessing

Paul



www.facebook.com/FMTrust



@PaulFmtrust



FRANCE MISSION IN BRIEF:

61 Churches and centres across France
123 Missionaries & trainees
16 Workers from the UK
Church growth through multiplication

Front page photo: Eglise M9: family-friendly outreach

A 500-year first



Missionaries Greg & Nikki Saldi report on the new church plant in Descartes

"We think something like 500 years." That's how long, according to a local official, since there was last a Protestant church in or around Descartes. True, there are churches 20-30 minutes away by car, but nothing official in the town for 500 years!

"What I've found here is a family that's about more than just Sunday church services." Our friend Florence, who's been active in so many things since the church started in October 2016, told us this during a recent prayer meeting.

These two quotations are linked: without a local "community", it's difficult for spiritual things to become a constant way of life and not just an hour carved out of the week. This is exactly why the Evangelical Protestant Church of Descartes was conceived and created by the France Mission church in Loches: **a single church operating on two campuses**. We hope to live



A Loches intern preaching in Descartes

You can contact the Saldis at

greg.saldi@gmail.com and find out more about the church at www.evangeliquedeloche.fr/descartes.php

The church exterior

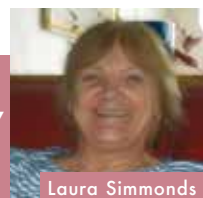


the reconciliation we can have with God, with ourselves, and with one another on a regular daily basis. We hope to change lives, to bring the broken to Christ, and to all live in community together.

"We hope to change lives, to bring the broken to Christ, and to all live in community together."

Our launch team of five was overjoyed to receive **Laura Simmonds** from the UK in February. Our brand new church plant is a beautiful image of God's Kingdom: multi-national and multi-cultural on one solid foundation (Jesus). Partnership comes alive in many ways: we welcome long-term workers, like Laura, short-term workers, and partner churches who support through prayer and financial gifts. **Please pray** for outreach opportunities, team health, and the spiritual combat in which we're engaged, so that everyone in Descartes can know the Good News.

Laura Simmonds will share more of her story in the next FM Trust appeal letter.



Laura Simmonds

What are the cultural factors affecting evangelism in France?



Missionaries Dave & Mary Brown explore some answers to this question

Paul declared the need for what mission strategists call “**contextualization**” when he wrote: “*I have become all things to all men that by all means I might save some*” (1 Corinthians 9:22). This wasn’t just a technique which would guarantee results since Paul himself only spoke of “*saving some*”. But it is glorifying to God because when we communicate the gospel clearly then “*every mouth will be silenced*” (Romans 3:19).



A lot of things could be written about evangelism in French culture. The **meal table** is an important part of life, and also a good place to share the gospel. The French love a good discussion so **debate** is very easy. On the other hand, a commitment to regular attendance at an event is less important than spending a really good evening together, so this somewhat limits the overall impact of courses such as Alpha or *Passerelles*.

You can contact the Browns at
david.brown.paris@gmail.com

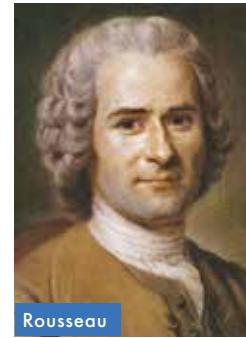


“There are two underlying foundations to French culture which affect our evangelism: Catholicism and philosophy.”

But behind the social aspects of culture, there are two underlying foundations to French culture which affect our evangelism: Catholicism and philosophy.

Catholicism

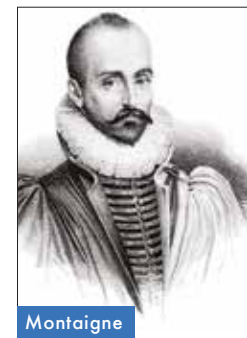
Catholicism is a wider concept than the teaching of the Catholic Church. It’s the way in which the Catholic Church has influenced the thinking of people whether they’re believers or not. The Catholic Church is seen as the “normal religion” since there is a church with a spire in every village and Catholicism is central in French history. The Mass with its incomprehensible liturgy and the way in which the Church always sided with the King, the nobles, and the rich led many people to reject belief in God on the grounds of anticlericalism (opposition to the priesthood). But because these people had retained the Catholic dogma that “outside the church there is no salvation”, they confused rejection of Catholicism with the rejection of Christianity. It never occurs to most people



Rousseau



Pascal



Montaigne



Descartes

that there may be another form of Christianity which is more biblical – and in some cases they consider that anything outside of the Catholic Church is a cult. The French sociologist Jean Baubérot has written that the French people have a long history of tolerance but very little idea of the need for pluralism. **So the first barrier we have to evangelism is a level of suspicion which is only just beginning to disappear.** A recent survey has shown that 74% of the population have heard of Evangelicals which is a remarkable increase on the small percentage when we first started church planting in France 40 years ago. So, in our evangelism and church life we must show the plausibility of the gospel in the French context.

Philosophy

Philosophy is the only compulsory subject for all French students in their last year of



Sartre & Beauvoir

By <http://www.flickr.com/people/69061470@N05> [CC BY 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

secondary education. There is a long history of philosophers in France from the Renaissance (Montaigne) and Classical Age (Descartes, Pascal), through the Age of Enlightenment (Voltaire, Rousseau) to the 20th century (Sartre, Beauvoir). Many, though not all, of these thinkers have been skeptical at best towards religious faith. As one writer put it: “Philosophy is the way of salvation without God”. Because of the secular approach to life (and, of course, education) in France, students understand via their philosophy course that you can think about life without God. **This is not the militant atheism of the so called “New Atheists” in the English-speaking world.** On the contrary, present-day atheists in France recognize the contribution of Christianity to democracy and human rights but they simply don’t take God into account. So our evangelism has to show that only the Christian faith really makes sense of life.

The idea for this article was suggested by a reader. God willing, the second and final part will appear in the next issue of the magazine. If you’d like to suggest a focus for a future article, please let Paul Cooke know at fmtrust@france-mission.org

Answered prayer in Châteauroux



Missionaries Paul & Marjorie Dowling explain how your prayers make a difference

In the last issue we talked about pressing on and trusting that the Lord is at work. Well, in the last few months we've begun to **see the fruit of this perseverance and the answer to many prayers** – so thank you and please keep on praying!

“We’ve seen the Lord wonderfully at work.”

We asked for prayer for a proposed **Alpha course** – and not only did it happen with seven participants including ourselves, but we've seen the Lord wonderfully at work. Two of those who took part were friends from our choir and one a lady whom our colleague Philippe met at the Forum des Associations (charity fair) in September. The others were the young woman recently baptised who came with her mum. At least three of those who took part are well on their way to a committed faith, though for all of them there is still a lot to learn, absorb,



Choir performing at the Christmas service



Christmas decoration workshop at Oasis (drop-in group)

and put into practice. None come from easy backgrounds. **Please pray** for them in these early stages of the life of faith when there are so many potential pitfalls. One joined the special choir we put together at church for the Christmas service, which felt an important step.

We asked for prayer for the young man Paul was preparing for baptism. **He was baptised** in a very joyful service in November with many of his family and friends present. He's going on well with the Lord, though sadly for us, he and his family plan to move to Angoulême in a few months' time.

We asked for prayer about **strengthening the leadership team** and spreading the load and mentioned that it would be lovely to have some experienced Christians come and join us. Shortly before Christmas **two new families arrived** and seem to be joining in well in the life of the church. We don't know them well enough yet to know their gifts and potential, but it's nonetheless encouraging! **Please continue to pray** that the Lord will give us discernment about potential leaders.

You can contact the Dowlings at paul.dowling@sfr.fr

Needs in northern Marseille



Missionaries Simon & Radia Allchin provide an update on their work in Saint Louis

How will God work in Marseille?



Our aim in this suburb of Marseille is to bring the gospel to the people in the most practical way possible. We all agree that the heart of the message is a call to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, but all of the world's large urban centres face **difficult social problems** which present challenges to Christians living in such areas.

In the 19th century the Salvation Army was called to respond to the problems of poverty and deprivation in the big cities of Britain. Today, in Europe at least, this type of poverty is rarely visible, but underneath there is a **deep moral poverty** resulting from many things such as split families, drug and alcohol abuse, school failure, and unemployment. Such problems are very widespread in the north of Marseille.

These situations have led us to think more about our social involvement in the city and, along with other evangelical churches, we're planning to organise sporting and school-support activities, especially as **Marseille is the 2017 European City of Sport**. In 2016 we also had some young Christians (working with OM: Operation Mobilisation) who came into the area to arrange football tournaments, and through

this we made some very good contacts with young people and their parents.

We could call this “soft evangelisation”, but here there is a pressing challenge for churches to be more visibly present. **We need more Christians in this area** and, whatever their gifts or talents, if they have a sincere desire to serve

Christ and an unconditional love for people, they would be very welcome! **Please pray** towards this end and, if you know of anyone who you think might be suitable, please ask them to contact us.



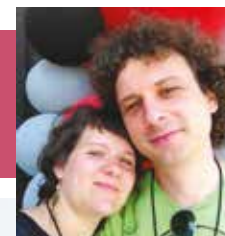
Football outreach



Outreach among children

You can contact the Allchins at simon.allchin@neuf.fr

M9 Church: part of the “Réactif” multisite



Missionaries Benoit & Rachel Jeanson review progress over the past year

Before building a tower, Jesus invites us to take stock (Luke 14:28-30). So that's what we did; but careful planning doesn't make it any less wonderful to see what we dreamed of starting to take shape. **The plan for 2016** was to build a team, to strengthen small groups, and to find external premises for our family outreach events. We also wanted to rethink our relationship with the Église de la Brie and turn the idea of “Réactif” into a reality (see insert).

The M9 team



Building a team: we now have one! About ten believers have joined us and are involved in our three outreach activities: small groups, the *Bi'Dieu'Dul* (“God thing”: for families with young children), and *Jump* (for teenagers). It's no longer a question of Christians coming from other churches to help us out, but of believers who now think of us as their own local church.



Strengthening small groups: there are now three of them. At the start of the new school year, we organised an evening where everyone involved met together with some potential new members. A few people didn't want to continue, but we've still got three full groups, one of which is English-language. One person (a non-Christian)

The Bi'Dieu'Dul



is still coming to his group, even though it takes him two hours to get there from work and a further 45 minutes to get home afterwards!

Premises for the Bi'Dieu'Dul: as this no longer takes place in our home, we're able to welcome more guests in better conditions. Some people have stopped coming, but new folk have taken their place. We sometimes have more than 50 people in attendance and our new rented premises might soon become too small!

Collaboration with the Église de la Brie: we now have a single leadership team; staff teams have regular joint meetings, pool resources, and help at each other's events. Although we manage our budgets separately, we use the same accounting software and try to pool procurement. We join with the Église de la



Brie for Sunday worship services, during one of which we had our first two baptisms.

Plans for 2017: first of all, we want to build on what we did in 2016: a team that's even more united and proactive, and a Bi'Dieu'Dul that's even more professional, welcoming, and challenging for families. We also want to develop a culture of invitation.

Finances: donations made in response to a FM Trust appeal letter at the start of 2016 enabled us to rent our current premises and to invest in some equipment. However, as already mentioned, these premises are only a temporary solution. So we're exploring the next step and have some money left over from the appeal letter to help with this. The Église de la Brie will also be looking to extend as they've outgrown their current building. **Thank you for praying** with us in relation to these needs that come from the “happy problem” of growth.

To allow greater focus on the M9 project, Benoit is going to be reducing the hours he works in secular employment. He and Rachel would therefore be interested in talking with anyone wishing to partner with them as FM missionaries. You can contact the Jeansons at benoit@eglisem9.com

The M9 Church (eglisem9.com) is a new church plant in the Parisian suburb of Montreuil, the last stop at the eastern end of the M9 métro line. From the start, M9 has worked in partnership with FM's Église de la Brie (eglisedelabrie.com: 40km to the south east), sharing its vision and values. At the end of 2015, the two plants decided to merge, giving birth to “Réactif”, a multisite church. To see a video providing a brief flavour of “Réactif”, go to <https://goo.gl/KaTcAs>



The Bi'Dieu'Dul

Building relationships in Blois



Missionaries Peter & Rachel Calvert are enjoying greater visibility and opportunities

View from the window of the gallery



“It’s wonderful to have this new visibility in town and the opportunities that go with it”

I (Rachel) am writing this from the desk in the window of **our new gallery**... it’s wonderful to have this new visibility in town and the opportunities that go with it. One of the mums from school has already dropped by this morning, and I was able to explain to her a little more of what we’re doing here. Another neighbour gave me a wave as she walked by. I know she’s a keen amateur painter and I hope that the exhibitions we have coming up will be a good way to get to know her better and to share the hope we have in Jesus. **Our heartfelt thanks** to all of you who pray for the project and/or have contributed to it financially.

Please pray for the opening of our first exhibition, with Korean artist **Kum Young Suk**, on **Saturday 11th March**. We plan to invite a number of local shop-keepers, business people, and community leaders as well as friends and neighbours. **Esther Pereira**, a soprano who is part of the Blois North Church, will be singing, and Young Suk will be explaining how and why

her Christian faith influences her art. I’ve been thankful for the opportunity to **open the Bible with three mums from school** on Thursday mornings lately... **please pray** that this would continue and grow. One of our aims this year is to establish small groups in the town centre where both disciples and enquirers can grow in their understanding of the gospel. It’s proved more difficult than we’d imagined for the two existing groups to open up to outsiders. The people we’ve been getting to know have so far proved more open to coming along to a Sunday gathering than to a small group. **Please pray** that we’d be sensitive to God’s leading both in the way we develop Sunday gatherings and the way we use small groups.



Sunday gathering at the hotel

You can contact the Calverts at pierrerachel.calvert@gmail.com

Halfway update



Trainee missionary Hannah Prior provides a mid-year report on her time in Paris



Lecture at Vaux

Télégraphe church: so far I’ve been involved with (or am getting involved with) the monthly kids club on a Saturday afternoon, pastoral visits to church members with Philippe the pastor, Sunday School, and crèche. I really appreciate the warm welcome I received, and it’s very interesting to see what it’s like to be in a larger church in France.

Studying at Vaux: I passed all of my exams in January and the new semester is underway. Things I’m studying this term include The Psalms and Wisdom literature, ethics, and church planting – the latter taught by Daniel Liechti, one of France Mission’s Directors. As well as the actual content of what I’m studying, my French is improving and I’m learning more about French culture and about the Francophone evangelical world. The classes have been a great encouragement spiritually too.

Teaching English: this is going well. I teach classes on a Monday evening and also give some individual lessons. However, the numbers in one of my English classes have dropped (work and family commitments have made it difficult for some to attend). **Please pray** for some more people to come along.

Opportunities: at the end of January I got talking with a lady on the train home from Vaux. She knows someone from her local evangelical church and has been to the church. **Please pray** God would use our conversation and that He would work in her heart.

I’m grateful to God for bringing me this far in France and, as an ongoing prayer point, **please pray** for wisdom for what I do next year and beyond.



Christmas party at Vaux

You can contact Hanna at hannah_prior@hotmail.com

Trusting in God for a Year Abroad



Student Emily Macdonald shares about being part of the Christian community in Rennes

As part of my French and Spanish degree, I spent the first semester of my Year Abroad studying in Rennes, Brittany. Before heading off to France, I felt **nervous about leaving my comfort zone** – in Sheffield I was part of a thriving church and Christian Union. FM Trust helped me make contact with two Christian student groups in Rennes and with the FM church there, but I still felt it'd be a struggle to be away from my UK support network.



A few of the 5,000 cups!

However, reflecting on my time in France, I can see so clearly how **God went before me** and how He helped me grow in my faith. Despite the difference in language, I immediately **felt at home at the church**, and although the **student group** (GBU: *Groupe Biblique Universitaire*) was smaller than I was used to (10 people instead

Emily is spending the second part of her Year Abroad in Ecuador with Latin Link. You can contact her at emilymacdonald96@gmail.com



Regional GBU get-together

of 100), I was blown away by their passion and drive to share the gospel on campus.

In addition to the evangelistic carol concerts (see Sofie Crump's article opposite), I was blessed to be part of a project called "**The Five Symbols of Student Life**". This involved distributing 5,000 cups decorated with symbols and filled with sweets and a leaflet encouraging students to think about which of the five symbols (exam results, popularity, etc.) they put their identity and trust in, and then explaining why Jesus is a better alternative. Throughout my four months, I was challenged to reconsider where my own trust lies. I learnt that **God is always with me**, wherever I am, and it's Him that I should rely on.



Praise God:

- that He prepared the way before me and stretched my faith
- that the small GBU in Rennes is so committed to sharing the gospel

Pray:

- that the students would see their friends come to know Jesus
- that everyone who received a cup would be touched by what they read

Brittany Christmas Concert Tour



FM supporter Sofie Crump reports on a significant student-led initiative

"We praise God for the many meaningful conversations had with friends after the concerts."



The choir in Rennes

Last December, I had the privilege of taking part in an **international choir formed by Rennes GBU** (student Christian Union). The concerts took place in the Brittany towns of **Rennes, Quévert, and Vannes**.

Over 200 guests came along to hear the Good News of Christmas! Songs were sung in French and English, and a clear gospel message was given by Joel Daut, the FM Pastor in Vannes. The concert at the **Palais des Arts** in Vannes seemed particularly significant as it is a civic building, and to be allowed to do a "religious" concert there was truly an answer to prayer. Although we had to be careful with certain aspects (e.g. we focused on the Bible as a part of our common cultural heritage), it was so encouraging to be able to reach out to people who may not ordinarily enter a church. **The feedback was brilliant:** one student who came along said that



Performing in Vannes

the look on our faces when we were singing made her want to believe in God! We praise God for the many meaningful conversations had with friends after the concerts. **Please continue to pray** and trust God with us to bring to completion the work He's begun in their hearts.

It was particularly encouraging to see Rennes GBU members, who had been witnessing to their friends throughout the year, inviting them along to the concerts and sharing the gospel with them. **Please pray** for future follow-up events such as "The Mark Drama" which we are hoping will take place for the second year running at Rennes II University in March/April 2017. **Please also pray** that the good contacts established at the Palais des Arts will lead to future opportunities, perhaps in the run up to Christmas 2017.

Until recently, Sofie was a member of the FM church in Dinan/Quévert. She has now returned to the UK as a Friends International staff worker in Cambridge. You can contact her at soficrump@hotmail.co.uk

Encouragements in Le Pré Saint Gervais

Missionaries Jonathan & Rachel Vaughan are thankful for a good start to 2017

Thank you for all your prayers for us in 2016. With the new year now well under way, **we're encouraged** by signs of God's continuing work in and through the congregation.

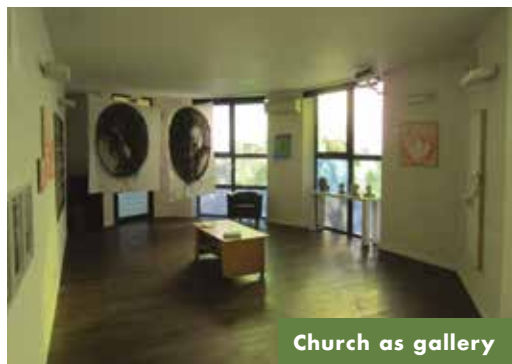
We're grateful for the way last year's art exhibition, café church, and the various Christmas events provided ways for people to hear the good news of Jesus. **Praise God** for one lady who came to café church in September, brought her two children to the all-age service in October, started attending regular services in November, and joined a small group in December!



...the 2016 art exhibition

The three small groups have been widely appreciated, and their members (most of the regular congregation) are enjoying the fellowship, encouragement, and sense of belonging. Some newly-arrived people at church have already settled into a group, which we see as a positive step. **Please pray** that the groups would not be inward-looking but keen to serve in

You can contact the Vaughans at
jony.vaughan@gmail.com



Church as gallery

practical ways at church, and reach out together to non-Christian friends.

One key aim for this year is that **many more duties** (music in services, service leading, Sunday school, crèche, cleaning, setting up, church website, accounts) would be **successfully delegated and shared** among church members, making use of their gifts and allowing the church to develop. **Please pray** for wisdom and patience in identifying and training church members for appropriate areas of service. Broadening the group of musicians who play on Sunday is a first step in this process.

Chanju Mwanza, a language student from University College London, has just joined us and will be helping at church until July in a variety of activities. She enjoys organising events, so we plan to do something on the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. **Please pray** for her to settle in to the church family quickly.



Chanju Mwanza

Other news from Paul Cooke



Future "France Days"

Assuming that France-Mission's planned merger with Vision-France is voted over the next couple of months, we'll be holding several smaller scale "France Days" in venues around the country to keep supporters up to speed with developments. The first of these is scheduled to take place in the **Newbury area on Saturday 24th June** (more information to follow in due course), with a second likely in Portsmouth in the autumn. If you'd be interested in hosting one of these events in your local church from autumn 2017 onwards, please let me know (fmtrust@france-mission.org).



Interested in French sung worship?

Elvira Gris is part of the team serving the FM churches in Firminy and Saint-Étienne. From 2011-13 she studied theology, worship, and music at the London School of Theology, and is now continuing with a Masters at the Evangelical Faculty of Theology at Vaux (near Paris). Her main interests are providing theological and practical training to worship groups; composing, recording, and performing her own French worship songs as a means of evangelism; and continuing to research the theology of praise. If you have an interest in sung worship and would be interested in connecting with Elvira, please email her at gcorinneelvira@yahoo.com.



What's French for Baguette?

FM supporter Joy Brodier's new book for those learning French can be viewed at <https://goo.gl/R2UEKf>. Joy is also able to offer accommodation in the Reims area (graham.brodier@neuf.fr).



Accommodation in UK?

The 16-year-old son of a FM pastor would like to spend some time in the UK this summer to improve his English. If you could help, please contact Paul Cooke (fmtrust@france-mission.org) for more details.



Free DVD

Vocation: Implanter d'église ("Vocation: Church-Planter") is an excellent DVD produced by the National Council of French Evangelicals. It presents five recent examples of French church planting, including the **FM church in Loches**. The DVD retails at about £8, but it's such a great resource that we'll gladly send it you for free! Please just complete and return the relevant part of the response form that came with this magazine.



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Each area representative offers your church or Christian Union group:

- Up-to-date news about God's work in France.
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- PowerPoint presentations to explain France Mission's strategy.
- France Mission literature.

Please contact your local representative direct by email, letter or phone as above.

ALL OTHER REGIONS

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FRANCE MISSION is a French-based Protestant evangelical mission organisation founded in France in 1957. Our French headquarters is at 36 bis rue du Borrégo, 75020 Paris. We are a fellowship of over 120 church-planting missionaries of all nationalities, of whom the majority are French nationals and 14 come from the United Kingdom.

FRANCE MISSION TRUST is the mission's UK support office, a registered charity (Number 267979) founded in 1974. Our UK Trustees are: Bob Crockford, Colin Judkins, Helen Robinson, and Charles Zealey. France Mission Trust is a group member of the Evangelical Alliance and a member society of Global Connections. Donations should be made payable to "France Mission" and sent to the Exeter office. Gifts designated for particular missionaries are forwarded without deduction.

This newsletter is also available in large print. It is published three times a year, and is available free of charge from:

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