



PERSPECTIVES

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Paul's page: a worrying bill

Reflections by Paul Cooke, France Mission's Director

There's a bill currently going through the French parliament that's causing considerable concern among evangelicals. Its official title is the "law to strengthen respect for Republican principles". On 16th February 2021, 347 French MPs voted in favour of the law with 151 voting against. It's now being debated in the Senate where a final vote is expected in April.

The aim of the law is to curb the influence of **Islamic extremism**. And, in the wake of atrocities such as the beheading of teacher Samuel Paty last year, that's obviously a good objective. But, for fear of appearing to target a particular faith, the government has taken an approach that may well make life unnecessarily difficult for evangelical churches.

donations of more than €10,000 per year from overseas being closely monitored. The aim is to limit foreign state funding of French mosques, but organisations like FM could well also be affected by the legislation.

Various politicians, including government ministers, have also made **factually incorrect statements** in the media over recent months suggesting that Republican values are threatened by evangelicals, and not just by Islamic extremists. You can watch a short compilation of these comments, followed by a response from the CNEF (National Council of French Evangelicals) on YouTube (see bit.ly/3aY0x1j).

Please pray for the CNEF as they continue to discuss possible amendments to the bill with French senators and also for senators as they debate and vote on the legislation. Pray for effective measures to curb Islamic extremism without threatening religious freedom for peaceful, law-abiding citizens. And **please pray** that politicians will see and celebrate the positive contribution being made to French society by more than half a million evangelicals as they follow their Servant King.

Every blessing in Christ

Paul



Front page photo: View over historic Blois

The government wants to tighten **administrative and financial controls** on "religious associations", which is the legal framework under which 90% of evangelical churches are registered (whereas most mosques are registered as "cultural associations"). The planned controls will place a very considerable burden on small and medium-sized churches, with

A year abroad in Saint-Georges-de-Didonne (Nouvelle-Aquitaine)



Student Joanna Chedghey reflects on the ups and downs of a strange year

Joanna is studying French at the University of Bristol and contacted France Mission about finding a church during her year abroad. She's settled at the Église Évangélique de Royan (addroyan.fr).

If you'd asked me at the beginning of my degree, or even at the beginning of my second year of university, how I thought my **year abroad in France** would pan out, I can assure you that adding a pandemic into the mix was not part of my plan. Thankfully though, it was part of God's – otherwise hope really would be lost!

This year has been for me, as it will have been for most people, full of **real lows** – namely loss and feelings of loneliness and lack of control (accompanied by a lot of comfort eating of **pains au chocolat** – still debating if that's a low or not).

I've been working in a couple of primary schools as an **English-language assistant** which thankfully hasn't been too disrupted as schools have remained opened for the duration of my time here so far. I will say, though, that teaching a foreign language to a group of young mask-wearing children whilst wearing a mask myself has been a challenge and a half!

However, despite the difficulties of this year, I've seen, perhaps more clearly than ever, the **goodness and steadfastness of God**. I've experienced this in obvious ways

like through the blessing of finding and being welcomed into a church family here in France, where I'm reminded of the good news of the risen Jesus each week, but also in more subtle ways, like through the sunsets that I've had the joy of witnessing (three cheers for living by the beach), pointing me to the perfect world to come.



A benefit of living next to the Atlantic Ocean...

In both the good and the bad moments, a verse that's come to mind time and again this past year is Lamentations 3.22-23: *"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."*

Praise God that in a situation that threatens to consume us, His love is more than sufficient, and His mercies are new each day!

You can contact Joanna at joanna.chedghey@gmail.com

Looking back on Blois



Student Sam Rees reports on his internship in a Perspectives church plant



In early 2020, I was studying French and Spanish at university looking forward to a year in Colombia. The pandemic changed all that with the Seminary where I was due to teach

English closing for the foreseeable future.

Disappointed but determined to retain some control over my life, I applied for an Erasmus placement in the Canary Islands. Content that nothing could again come between me and warm weather, I went to serve with **Interaction Camps** over the summer to practise my French. It was there that I met Peter & Rachel Calvert who offered the possibility of coming to Blois if Erasmus didn't work out. Soon after, my university cancelled all Erasmus placements prompting me to take a gap year and move to Blois. All of this has taught me **patience and humility** and I'm grateful for the role the Lord prepared for me in Blois where I could serve Him while growing in my faith.

I arrived in September 2020 without the usual months of preparation. Having taken a gap year, I had no funding, but God in His goodness provided me with the **Calvert family** who housed and fed me while I looked for something more permanent. I began to settle into church life with regular



Sunset over historic Blois



Evening view over Blois and the River Loire

prayer meetings, helping out at kids' clubs, and gradually getting to know a few people and the city itself.

During my time here, I've had **numerous opportunities** to grow spiritually ranging from training in exegesis to the evangelistic applications of French Church history. However, for anyone considering a similar internship, I'd encourage you to consider the spiritual benefits you receive simply by being in a new church setting. Although a little different from what I was used to, seeing that I have these brothers and sisters all over the world, all working towards the same goal, amazes me.

"I'm grateful for the role the Lord prepared for me in Blois where I could serve Him while growing in my faith."

God provided me with a job teaching English at a **Catholic school**, among the perks of which were three meals a day in the regionally-renowned canteen and lodging in the Cathedral Presbytery with a group of Catholic priests. In His sovereignty, God placed me somewhere where I would benefit from others' knowledge of the Bible whilst being challenged to question and thereby strengthen my own faith.

The other benefit of being in a Catholic school is that the ban on "religious expression" found in state schools doesn't apply. So, I was able to talk about my faith freely, even planning some lessons around the Bible. I also had numerous conversations in the canteen about why I was in Blois, which from time to time led to deeper discussions about God. **Please pray** that the Holy Spirit would work in the lives of the teachers and pupils I met in Blois.

I eventually heard that the **Seminary in Colombia** was reopening in January. Visa issues and travel restrictions over in the UK meant I wasn't able to leave France until 25th February. Again, I had to trust Proverbs 19:21: *"Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."* And this last month in France presented multiple opportunities, including being able to **share my testimony** at an adult English class. They asked lots of questions afterwards so I pray that this might be genuine interest leading them towards the Lord.

I'll now be working with theology students in Colombia for 17 months, helping them learn English in the hope that it opens doors for future ministry. I ask for prayer that the Lord would continue to look after me during this time and that, in all I do, His purposes might be fulfilled.

If you'd like to receive Sam's prayer letter, you can contact him at samueljerees@gmail.com

Sam teaching the Bible to a youth group



Perspectives on the task ahead

In addition to planting a church with husband Peter in Blois, Rachel Calvert serves on the Perspectives Council



How can we best be faithful in serving God, serving His church, and serving His world? It's been nearly three years now since France-Mission and Vision-France joined forces to become Perspectives, with the aim of being more effective in fulfilling the mission which God has entrusted to us. Bringing together two denominational cultures has not always been straightforward. But we are grateful to God for His help and look to Him as together we seek to write the next chapters of the story.

We long to see the multiplication of disciples and of churches, and need to discern how, as a denomination, we can best support and envision local churches. When we began reflecting and praying about strategic priorities for the next stage of our life together, no-one was expecting a pandemic. But Covid-19 has brought into sharp relief many of the tendencies which were already present in our society and in our churches. Digital technologies are shaping our working lives, our



Patrice Alcindor presenting Perspectives' values

relationships, and our churches in new ways. Inequalities within our society are being exacerbated. Artificial intelligence and biotechnologies are forcing us to ask big questions about what it means to be human. The threat of climate change and environmental degradation are contributing to a crisis of hope. These are the times in which God has called us to lift up the name of Jesus! (See John 3.14-17)



The council and directors of Perspectives will be meeting 18th-19th March to continue work on our strategic plan for the next few years. Please pray that God, in His grace, would lead us and that, as a denomination, we would enter fully into the works He has prepared for us to do (Ephesians 2.8-10).

If you'd like to hear more about Perspectives' vision and values, you can watch a series of short videos (in French) on their YouTube channel at bit.ly/3utLvYQ. If you'd like to subscribe to their monthly newsletter (also in French), you can do so at the bottom of their homepage (eglises-perspectives.org).

How can I pray for denominational leaders?

Rachel Calvert continues our "How can I pray for...?" series



The Perspectives national leadership team. From left: Guillaume Hirschy, Daniel Liechti (retired 2020), Patrice Niveaux, Jean-Georges Gantenbein, Didier Fuin, Patrice Alcindor

Local church leadership is challenging. Denominational leadership no less so! Please pray that God would raise up godly and gifted leaders for the different church networks within France. Here are some ways you could pray specifically

You can see that the regional directors have a lot of ground to cover! This situation is not ideal and makes it all the more important that they can delegate some of the load (see Stéphanie Revault's article on pages 6-7 of the previous issue of *France Mission Perspectives*, available online at bit.ly/2VPOiwX). Both Patrice Alcindor and Didier Fuin will be passing on the baton within the next couple of years, so please pray for God's leading in the choice of a new president for Perspectives, and at least one new regional director.

Please pray for:

- love for the Lord and for His people
 - a renewed vision for God's glory in and through his church, and insight into the practical outworking of that vision
 - protection from temptation, exhaustion, and cynicism
 - trust and good communication with local church leaders
 - wisdom in difficult pastoral situations
 - good teamwork
- You can contact Rachel at pierrerachel.calvert@gmail.com
- Patrice Alcindor: President
 - Didier Fuin: regional director for the South-East
 - Patrice Niveaux: regional director for the Paris region, Western, Northern and Central France
 - Jean-Georges Gantenbein: regional director for Alsace and Eastern France
 - Guillaume Hirschy: administrative director

Sharing God's love in northern Marseille

Pastoral work overview (Thierry Steux):

In 2020, despite the Covid lockdowns, we were happy to baptize one person and to welcome several **new people** into the church who were already Christians but newcomers to the area. Today we're also in contact with several Muslims who come when they're invited, and others who are quite happy to come along with some of us to attend a young people's group in a neighbouring church.

As for the pastoral work itself, we're in a **very needy area** where some need to be followed up more than others and where certain people come from very difficult family and sociological backgrounds.

Due to a fear of the current virus, we've seen less of some of our members, and one of the areas of difficulty has been



Thierry & Laurence Steux

the drop in the number of children coming to the Sunday meetings. In spite of this, we're grateful for the warm welcome given to the new people who've joined the church and are pleased that we've managed to continue with regular services and prayer meetings (although with legally limited numbers).

One of our important projects for this year is to begin an **adult Bible course** in the foundations of the Christian faith and, of course, there is our urgent need for **bigger premises** to continue the work in the future.



Catherine

Outreach to children and families (Catherine):

I arrived here in 2019, with the intention of starting outreach activities for children and families in a **housing estate** close to the Saint-Louis Church. I developed a particular interest for this part of town when I first lived in northern Marseille for two years from 2005. During that time, I was struck by the size and number of the housing estates around here and saddened to think that very few inhabitants had been able to hear about the good news of Jesus Christ. That's why I decided to come back to Marseille.



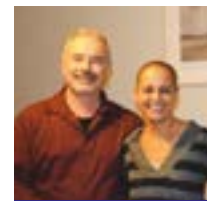
Thierry with students from the French course for refugees

A series of reports from the team in Saint-Louis



Possible outdoor space for the children's club

Our project is to start up a regular children's club in the housing estate close to our church building, through which we can **meet families** and share the message of the gospel with them. The club will be a time of fun and games for children and their families. Each club will have a theme presented to the children through games, sketches, and a simple message, in a fun and engaging way. The most important thing about the club is not the content of the club itself but the **relationships** which we hope to create by coming regularly to the estate and showing the love of Christ to the families we meet. The club is due to start in April, if the restrictions are lifted enough to allow that.



Simon & Radia Allchin

French-language class for refugees (Simon Allchin):

Following contacts made in a refugee hostel near the church, we started this group about **2-3 years ago**.

With the recent partial lockdown this has been more difficult, but the group still exists and has even started functioning again.

The aim is to help people from various countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, and Sudan settle down in France, but also to witness in a very practical way. The lessons are given in the church building and so they know from the start that we are Christians, but many people from **Muslim backgrounds** now come to the courses and we consider it a miracle that they feel free to enter a church. There are also others from **Orthodox backgrounds** who've come to France to escape persecution in their own country.

Through these courses we now have **many fruitful contacts** with different people and, even if some of them end up living and working elsewhere, we hope and pray that these contacts with Christians will have been a powerful witness to them. Of course, we leave the most important part to God: the growth of the gospel seed that's been planted in their lives.

Finally, we hope to buy an apartment in the North of Marseille (where prices are extremely cheap) to set up a sort of Christian Hostel to help refugees who sometimes need a place to sleep for 1-2 weeks before moving on to other places.

You can contact Simon about any of these reports at simon.allchin20@gmail.com

A French church in central London

Intern Charlie Vogt reports on French Connect London

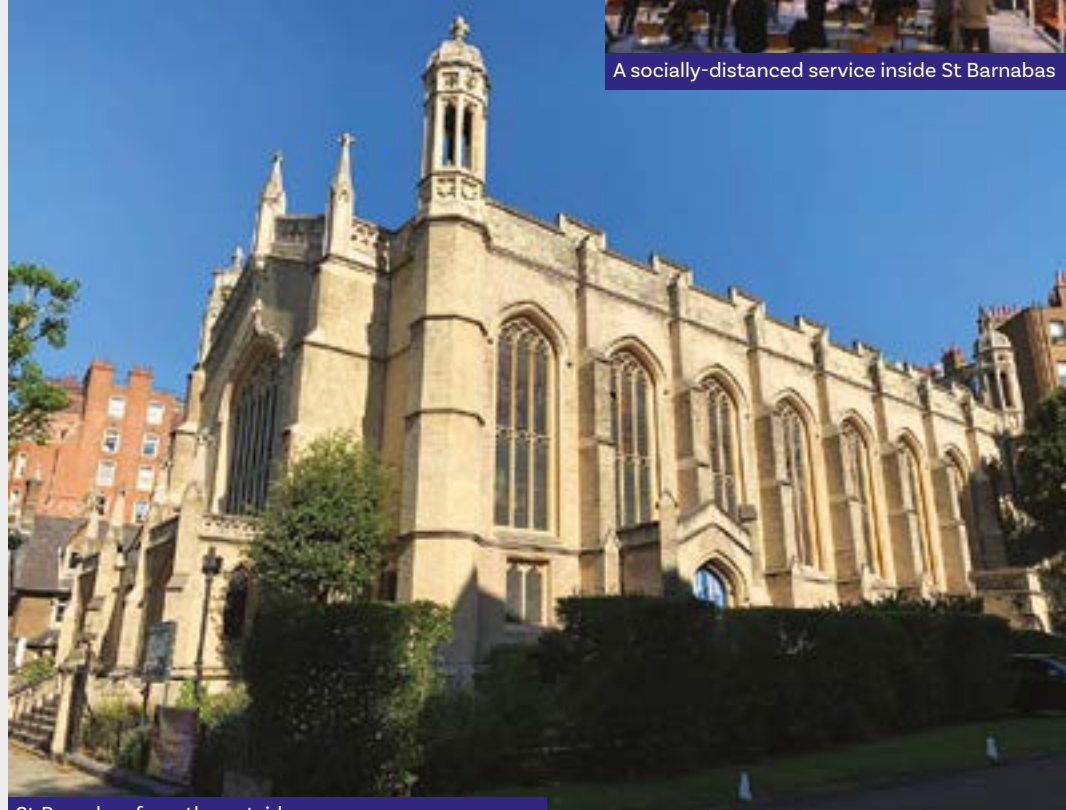
A few words of introduction about myself will help you understand how I ended up in the *France Mission Perspectives* magazine. I'm 25 years old and from Alsace in France. I grew up in the **Perspectives church in Mulhouse** (la-chapelle-evangelique.fr) where I also became a Christian. This church remains a strong source of spiritual support for me and I'm glad to keep in touch with them regularly. Jean-Georges Gantenbein, regional director for the Perspectives churches in Alsace and Eastern France, was my pastor growing up and, towards the end of 2018, he put me in touch with Paul Cooke, France Mission's UK Director. As a result of this contact, from January to August 2019 I was able to do an internship at the church where Paul is one of the leaders: Belmont Chapel in Exeter.



“Our hope is to see all French-speaking churches being renewed by the work of the Holy Spirit.”

I'm writing these few words about my ministry from the Borough of **Kensington** in London. This year is special for me, not only because of Covid but also because I'm in the months running up to my wedding with my fiancée Maria that'll take place this summer, God willing. She's British and so this year in London is also a transition year for me heading toward married life.

In September 2020, I started a one-year scheme in London provided by the Church



St Barnabas from the outside

of England for young adults who want to get ministry experience by dedicating most of their time to serving in their local church. I'm in the church of **St Barnabas** where I mostly work alongside Jean-Luc Sergent, one of the Vicars at St Barnabas and Pastor of **French Connect** (stbk.org.uk/frenchconnect). The latter is a French-speaking church that meets in the St Barnabas building with the vision of reaching out to the enormous community



A socially-distanced service inside St Barnabas

of French-speaking people in London.

The French Connect identity is very much based on connecting with people as well as with God. We enjoy seeing people engaging with others while doing things they love, like eating – and food, as we all know, is very important to French people! More generally, we also seek to see Christians connecting with one another; **Christian unity** is therefore also a strong aspect of French Connect. In this way, we

also want to bless the church in France with our work. We were pleased recently to be one of the driving forces in the **two songs that were released on YouTube** (“La Bénédiction” and “Le Chant des anges”) to help Christians from the whole French-speaking world stand firm in this difficult time of the pandemic and to contribute to creating a sense of unity among Christians. Our hope is to see all French-speaking churches being renewed by the work of the Holy Spirit and we would love to contribute to this from where we are.

I'm thankful to God for making this year possible. I'm glad that I've been able to get to know the Church of England more and it's a pleasure to serve the Lord at St Barnabas and be part of the church family there. Even though the pandemic has had such an impact on us all this year, I'm amazed at the creativity that's enabled



our church life to keep going through these circumstances that have completely changed the way we used to do things. **Please do pray** for French Connect as we continue to try and make Jesus known among the French speakers in central London.

You can contact Charlie at vogtcharlie@gmail.com

You can watch the songs mentioned by Charlie at bit.ly/3byp8Zu and bit.ly/3umH6qq



News from the Perspectives church in Romorantin



Church members Graham & Pauline Stevens provide an update

The church at Romorantin-Lanthenay is alive and well! The last year has not been easy but, by God's grace, we've managed to **stay open** for many weeks. God has been faithful, and we're thrilled to see the work thrive.

One of our **young people**, Adrien, is studying at the Geneva Bible Institute and we're grateful that he's growing in his faith. (Wonder where God will lead him after he completes his studies?!) He's a fine young man, full of enthusiasm. Over the year, other young people have been encouraged to serve in the church by leading worship and Bible studies.

Our **oldest member**, Gabriel, is nearly 102. He loves fellowship and likes sharing God's Word, especially the Psalms, with folk who visit him. Even in lockdown God provided a Christian lady to care for him. As time goes by, Gabriel gets tired easily and suffers with various health problems.



Socially-distanced baptism

At the end of the summer, we were able to have a "socially-distanced baptism". It was great to gather together supporting Jonathan as he took this step in obedience. We're grateful that Peter Calvert is helping us during our time without a Pastor. We're also grateful to others who bring us God's word. In the times when we haven't been able to meet together in-person we gather "virtually" through YouTube and Jitsi. Our website shows a number of those meetings (see eperomorantin.mystrikingly.com).

To conclude, a few **prayer requests**:

- For safety during these difficult days of Covid.
- For our young people, that their faith will grow and deepen.
- For all those who bring us God's word – that we may receive what the Lord is saying to us as a church. **Please pray** that those who are helping us bring us relevant teachings for the church here in Romorantin.
- We'd value prayer for Graham's health: he's been unwell with pneumonia for a long time and so we've had to be careful in mixing with others, which has been very frustrating. He's due to see a new consultant in Vierzon soon.

You can contact Graham & Pauline at pauline.stevens@hotmail.co.uk

Progress in the Somme



Pastoral couple Olivier & Julie Toledo provide an update

Since 2020, France Mission has been helping to support the Toledos as they work with three Perspectives churches in the Somme area of north-eastern France.

We really enjoy working in the Somme and are grateful for the opportunity to work with the Perspectives churches in **Amiens, Abbeville, and Albert**. Although the pandemic has certainly brought challenges, the churches have continued offering regular services and fellowship, whether in-person or online.

Since we arrived 18 months ago, here are some of the areas in which the Lord has enabled us to make progress:

- Creation of a youth group for 15 teenagers
- Pooling of resources for youth & children's workers across the 3 churches
- Creation of a preachers' group to support one another in teaching ministry
- Regular training events across the 3 churches
- Overseas mission support for a pastor in Burkina Faso

Looking ahead, we're excited about the possibility of welcoming an intern from September 2021. This will be a **joint venture between three partners** all based in Amiens: the Perspectives church, a Christian organisation called FEU (Foyer



Equithéo Christian bookshop

Évangélique Universitaire) that works with university students (amiens.lefeu.org), and Equithéo – a Christian bookshop that also stocks Fairtrade products ([@Equitheolibrairiecommerce](https://www.facebook.com/Equitheolibrairiecommerce) on Facebook).

The internship would be a one-year post offering experience with all three participating organisations and is open to single Christian applicants of either sex keen to work in a team and with good interpersonal, organisational, and IT skills. There is the possibility of financial help and also low-cost accommodation. **If you know of anyone** who might be interested, do please pass them our details.

Thank you very much for your support and **please pray** for ongoing fruit from the ministry throughout 2021, remembering Jesus' words in John 15.5: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

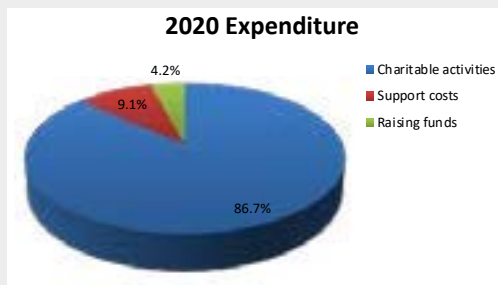
You can contact Olivier & Julie at olivier.toledo@eglises-perspectives.org



2020 financial review

Paul Cooke provides an overview of how supporters' generous donations were used last year

Compared to the previous year, 2020 saw a relatively small decrease in total income and a moderate decrease in total expenditure. Income fell from £410k to £398k, while expenditure fell from £444k to £399k (see pie charts for more detail). The decrease in total income was due to a fall in restricted gifts; general giving actually rose in 2020. Nearly 87% of total expenditure goes directly towards our charitable activities. Now that the Brexit dust is settling, the Trustees aim to identify suitable missionaries and projects to support from surplus reserves in 2021.



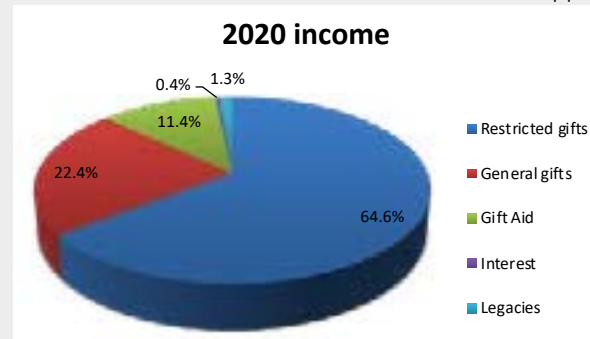
in 2020, though there were still 54 new entries in the database. This year, we're investing particularly in **social media** with a view to attracting new supporters. We're blessed with fantastically faithful long-term supporters but are conscious of the need to recruit new mission partners.

A huge thank you to all supporters, old and new, whose prayerful generosity is helping God's kingdom to grow in France. May He continue to enable and prosper the work through the gifts and prayers of His people!

All figures are subject to approval by the Trustees and Independent Examiner. The accounts for 2020 will then be available on the FM website (bit.ly/3uy7duQ). If you'd like any more information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Thank you once again for your amazing support!

If you'd like a statement of personal gifts for the 2020-21 tax year, please just ask and I'll gladly supply you with one (paulcooke@francemission.org).



Given that **legacy revenue** declined again last year (from £9k in 2019 to £5k in 2020), overall income held up very well given the concerns around Covid. Legacies are unpredictable, so we never include them in our plans, but whenever they arrive they can make a **huge difference** – a legacy really is the ultimate gift.

With little scope for advertising etc. last year, there were few **new prayer partners**

Other news from Paul Cooke



France Day: 24th April 2021

This will be held, God willing, as an **online event** via Zoom. Our main speakers will be **Jonathan Vaughan** (Paris-Cardinet) and **Stéphanie Revault** (Rennes-Sud) from France and myself from the UK. Full details (including the link to join the event) will be published in FM's email prayer bulletin for April. If you don't receive that, please feel free to email me directly to receive the information (paulcooke@francemission.org). Or you can sign up for the bulletin at bit.ly/FMbulletin. I do hope to see you there!



through all the responses, but I'll be sharing insights in due course. And if you'd like a **free copy of the poster** that was advertised with the questionnaire (showing FM's mission partners in France), please use the response form or email me.

Social Media pages

It's very encouraging to see how many people have started following our new-look pages. If you use social media, please do engage with us at [@FranceMissionUK](https://www.facebook.com/francemissionuk) (Facebook) or [francemissionuk](https://www.instagram.com/francemissionuk) (Instagram). Thank you very much!

Saving Europe

This is the title of a new book from FM supporter Henry Vyner-Brooks that explores the lives of Columbanus (a 6th-century Irish monk) and Robert Schuman (20th-century French statesman) to highlight the impact of Christianity on Europe's cultural formation. Henry has also started producing a series of YouTube videos connected to the project. You can view the first one at bit.ly/3aWpBpp.

Questionnaire & Poster

Many thanks to all of you who've completed the **FM questionnaire** so far. The online version can still be accessed at bit.ly/3sG8SgI. It'll take me a while to go



France Mission: Love France – Love Mission – Love Church

France Mission's vision is to see increasing numbers of people in France encountering God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – through the work and witness of local evangelical churches. As a support organisation, we provide targeted, strategic support to help the French evangelical church move closer to achieving its own goals. To find out more, please visit francemission.org.

If your church or small group would like to hear more about the Lord's work in France, please contact Paul Cooke to book a speaker:

- Email: paulcooke@francemission.org
- Phone: (+44) 07980 450462 or (+44) 01392 213275
- Post: PO Box 743, Exeter EX1 9RN, UK

Support France Mission when you shop online

We've registered with two websites – **easyfundraising** and **TheGivingMachine** – that enable you to raise funds for France Mission whenever you shop online. Both sites provide access to a wide variety of popular retailers, are easy to use, and don't cost you (or us) a penny!



So, if you shop online, please do consider signing up either at easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/francemission or at thegivingmachine.co.uk/causes/france-mission and help us raise more funds to support the Lord's work in France.

We're also registered with **AmazonSmile**. If you already have an Amazon account, you'll be able to use the same account details for AmazonSmile.



On your first visit to smile.amazon.co.uk you need to select a charitable organisation to receive donations (please select France Mission).

Amazon will remember your selection and, as long as you make purchases through *smile.amazon.co.uk* (rather than the standard Amazon website), eligible purchases will result in an automatic donation to France Mission at no extra cost to you.

Also, your Amazon mobile app can now be linked to your Amazon Smile account so that purchases made via the app will also generate income for France Mission.

Thank you!

