



France
Mission

PERSPECTIVES

No. 9 | Autumn 2021 | www.francemission.org

Registered Charity 1176433



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Paul's page: Legacy

Reflections by Paul Cooke, France Mission's Director

Do you remember the Wombles? I loved them as a child and particularly remember a handmade Orinoco received as a birthday present! I was intrigued to see that they star in a recent video by an organisation called **Remember a Charity** to encourage people to support charities by leaving a gift in their will (see bit.ly/3933sUu).



No matter what age you are, it's always a good idea to **make a will**. After my father died last year, the fact that he'd made a will made things a lot easier for the executors.

Many charities rely on legacies to fund their work. According to the September 2021 issue of *Fundraising Magazine*, for example, "legacy income accounted for 65% of overall fundraised income" for the National Trust in 2019–20. This isn't the case for France Mission; legacies only made up 1% of our income last year. So, we never rely on legacy income in our planning, but any income we do receive from this source means that we can offer support over and above what we plan for. This reflects the truth of what Paul writes in Philippians 4.19: "my God will meet all

your needs *according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.*" What we receive from the Lord has a habit of far exceeding our expectations!

If you need to make a will, now is a good time to do this since, every November, an organisation called **Will Aid** (willaid.org.uk) works with participating solicitors so that, rather than paying a fee, clients make

a voluntary donation to support the work of several big charities. France Mission isn't among them (!), but you can choose to leave a gift in your will to FM if you'd like to do that.



A huge **thank you** to all of you who've already chosen to do that, or who choose France Mission as the beneficiaries of *in memoriam* gifts. By supporting our ministry in this way, you're helping to create a legacy of eternal significance in France.

Every blessing in Christ

Paul



Paul Cooke

Front page photo: Hospitality for international students in Nantes

A Christian approach to the arts



Missionary Dave Brown introduces his new book



After working on it for ten years, my book *Une approche chrétienne des arts* (A Christian Approach to the Arts) was published over the summer by Excelsis. The sub-title is "Playground or battlefield" because the arts can give great pleasure but at the same time call into question dearly held beliefs. This has obvious **implications for evangelism!**



I show in my book that art has several functions: revealing reality, telling stories which we can identify with, making us aware of the passing of time and death, asking questions, stimulating our imagination, communicating a vision of



Biblical art exhibition

used by the artist! However, the amazing thing is that the human mind tries to understand, and people try to share what they feel, by using language. So that means that **spiritual questions** can first be talked about indirectly via a discussion on the arts before enough confidence is built up to talk about more personal issues.

My prayer is that churches will make the most of **God's gift of the arts** to proclaim the gospel, as one part of its apologetics.

"The aim is to make Christianity plausible before people start to wonder about its truth."

The aim is to make Christianity plausible before people start to wonder about its truth. Back in the 17th century the French philosopher Blaise Pascal wrote about this: "Men despise religion [...]. Firstly, show them how desirable it is and make them want it to be true. Then, show them it is true."

In this connection, could you pray that more churches would think of using the **Perspectives Bible exhibition** *De la Parole à la Peinture* (delaparolealapeinture.com) that uses a series of famous paintings based on biblical themes? And could you also **pray** for a small committee which is working on a project to make an evangelistic book based on this exhibition?

If you'd like to buy a copy of Dave's book, please contact him at david.brown.paris@gmail.com

the world. And it does this in an almost mysterious way by producing effects on the public which go beyond the means



A Christian centre for artists in Normandy



Missionaries Steve & Miki Thrall explain the vision behind La Pommeraiie

Note from Paul Cooke: I first met Steve in the UK over a decade ago and was impressed by his vision for sharing the gospel through the arts. Steve regularly preaches in evangelical churches around Normandy, and France Mission is very happy to handle gifts for him and Miki or for La Pommeraiie through our link with Artists in Christian Testimony International (actinternational.org). Please just use the response form (or contact me) if you'd like to support this ministry.

For generations France has been at the forefront of the downward spiral of **European secularization**. Christianity has been scoffed at, ridiculed, and marginalized. It's been almost impossible to be taken seriously as an intellectual while at the same time affirming faith in the gospel of Jesus. Thankfully the wind has shifted and there are signs of hope! The number of new Bible study groups and church plants has been slowing increasing.

One of the doors that's opened is by way of **the arts**. The French population is generally very suspicious of anything religious yet warmly embraces quality art and good artists, be they Christians or not. The Church has often been reticent to explore this path, which disappoints us. We believe that the human ability to imagine and create comes from being created in the image of God.

In March 1988 we came to Paris to be part of a church-planting initiative. Along the way we met an increasing number of Christians who were professional artists in the areas of theatre, music, mime, dance, and visual art. While we worked hard to find opportunities to share the gospel, our French artist friends had ample opportunities even when they were not seeking them. This shouldn't have surprised us. **In France good art attracts attention.** Art is indirect. It breaks down walls and opens doors by asking questions, inviting dialogue, exploring emotional responses through creative work. Art helps to build relationships and community.

For nearly two decades our ministry has been primarily oriented toward artists and the Paris arts community. Three years ago, we moved to a property called La



La Pommeraiie



Pommeraiie in Normandy with the desire to provide a place to receive creatively gifted people who work in a wide variety of artistic disciplines. La Pommeraiie consists of a 300-year-old thatched roof cottage and two guest houses on one metric acre surrounded by beautiful farmland. We're 45 minutes south of Deauville and Honfleur and 1.5 hours by train from the centre of Paris.

The vision of La Pommeraiie is to provide a quiet, inspiring place to rest and create.



Inside La Pommeraiie

Our desire is to support artists in their creative process, while opening doors to a deeper spiritual encounter with God, the great Creator. Artists need to find a place to escape the busyness of life to concentrate and focus on their creative work. Artistic creation often requires time, space, and a peaceful setting: three elements hard to find in a busy city. We desire to create a welcoming place where a variety of creative people can come

to find a listening ear, a place to rest, and space to work. We want to welcome both Christian and non-Christian artists. For believers, in addition to a place to work creatively, it will also be a place of **pastoral care and discipleship**. For non-believers we'll provide a place to work and welcome them into our home for conversation and discussions on creativity and exploring spiritual hunger.

“We desire for La Pommeraiie to prepare the way for creative people to be inspired by their Creator.”

Artists are influencers in French society. Philosopher Jacques Maritain said, “Art is the John the Baptist of the heart, preparing its affections for Christ.” We desire for La Pommeraiie to prepare the way for creative people to be inspired by their Creator.

You can contact Steve & Miki at pommeraiie.art@gmail.com

To see a short presentational video, go to bit.ly/La-Pommeraiie

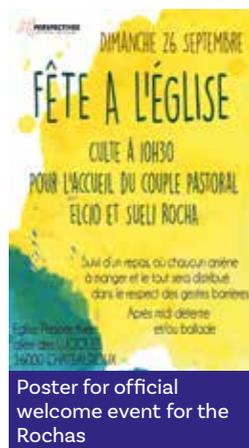
The next stage

An update from new Trustees
(and former missionaries)
Paul & Marjorie Dowling



People sometimes ask us how we're finding our retirement. Our answer is usually "We don't know yet"! It's been such a strange time since our retirement and return to the UK last year in the middle of the pandemic. Most of the things we'd expected to do just haven't been possible – at least until recently. Having said that, it's been far from a wasted period. We've settled into **Harrogate** – a town we knew well as for many years we came to visit Marjorie's parents who lived here. We're loving being near our son and his family, including our two delightful granddaughters, whom we

see regularly. We've also enjoyed spending more time with our daughter Fiona and her partner Ross. And we've settled nicely into our **new church** – Kairos Community Church (kairoschurch.net), an Anglican "fresh expression", built around missional communities. We're gradually working out where we fit in the church, but a potentially key part of that is a little **French conversation group** that we've started, modelled on the English conversation group we ran in Châteauroux. It's small but has started well and we've twice linked up by Zoom with the group in France, a development that we hope will lead on to further things, such as exchange visits when that once again becomes practical.



Poster for official welcome event for the Rochas



Kairos Community Church Sunday worship



A new home

One sadness is that, due to the pandemic, we've not been able to go back to France to visit our friends, nor receive visitors here, though we very much hope to be able to do so before too long. We always felt that we'd like to be able to continue to support the church in France in some way during our retirement – though, even during the lockdowns, we've had a lot of contact by Zoom! We're delighted that **Elcio & Sueli Rocha** have moved to **Châteauroux** as the next pastoral couple and pray that the Lord will bless their

“We're looking forward to contributing to the encouragement of the French church through FM.”

ministry there. We'd also like to pay tribute to the **Church Council** who've kept things going so well during the period between pastors, especially during a pandemic, and, in particular, to Daniel & Jenny Villaudière who've done a wonderful job in leading the church through this challenging period. As they say in France, "Chapeau!" **Please pray** for the church in Châteauroux and for Elcio & Sueli as they enter this new phase of ministry together.

One way we're able to support the work in France is through France Mission. The Trustees have kindly invited us both to **become Trustees** and we've accepted with great joy. We're learning our way through the various administrative complexities of modern-day CIOs (Charitable Incorporated Organisations) and are looking forward to contributing to the encouragement of the French church through FM.



The château in Châteauroux: a leaving present from the church

In the last few weeks, it's been great to see things start to open up and to be able to enjoy a bit more social contact, including beginning to catch up with family and friends around the country. One of our other aims is to get out and **meet local people outside the church** and so Pilates classes (for Marjorie) and Italian (for Paul) are on the agenda and we plan to explore joining a local choir as well. **Our prayer** would be that the Lord would guide us in the use of our time so that we may continue to be fruitful for Him in whatever way He leads in our retirement. May we ask you to join us in praying for this, too.

You can contact Paul & Marjorie at pauldowling@francemission.org or marjoriadowling@francemission.org

Supporting students through the pandemic



Saotra & Élodie Rajaobelina report on their ministry in Nantes

On 14th March 2020 President Macron announced that all educational establishments needed to close as a result of the pandemic. At the time, few students realised how long it would be before they saw their lecture theatres again – for some it wouldn't be until the start of the new academic year in September 2021! But the lack of interaction wasn't just limited to their studies. Successive **lockdowns and curfews made it very difficult to develop any relationships** in the real (non-virtual) world. A female student told us that during lockdowns she would spend hours sitting in the bathroom of her little studio flat just to make a change from being in her bedroom!

Although at the start of the pandemic fear of the virus was certainly a reality, what really came to worry students was a fear of restrictions being prolonged or reintroduced. But, of course, there have been **numerous other problems** too:

- money worries for those who lost their student jobs during the lockdowns
- deteriorating mental health for many students due to isolation
- lack of motivation for the medium and long term



Foreign students encountered additional difficulties: French nationals living in halls of residence moved back to their parents, which wasn't possible for those who'd come from overseas. Some of those who'd come from countries with poor health systems were very worried about family members as their homelands became overwhelmed by Covid. One female student we know well had to go through the incredibly painful experience of losing her mum in Brazil during the first wave without being able to see her before she died; she couldn't go to the funeral or grieve with the rest of her family either.

Our ministry focuses on these foreign



The international language of hospitality



Handing out sandwiches at hall of residence

students, working with an organisation called **AEM (Amis des Étudiants du Monde)**, similar to Friends International in the UK. Pre-Covid, we used to hold **discussion evenings** in the Perspectives church in Nantes on Fridays that were open to all students, whatever their culture or religion. We sometimes had up to 130 visitors! Covid, of course, put a stop to that. We decided not to try and continue on Zoom because students were using that medium all day for their classes. We needed the Holy Spirit's help



Garden party

to find innovative solutions for meeting students since, during the lockdowns and curfews in France, it was only possible to move around for urgent reasons and an official document was necessary to justify being out and about. One of the officially sanctioned "urgent reasons" was **distributing food**, so, for more than a year, our main activity was picking up surplus stock from bread shops and then taking the food to students in their shared flats, halls of residence, etc.

This certainly helped those who were struggling financially but, even more importantly, we

were often the **only people** these students saw apart from the other students they lived with. Some of the discussions that we had with them led to reading the Bible together. During this time, we were also able to deepen relationships with certain students and have had the joy of seeing **one of them come to the Lord** and decide to get baptised.



Free bread!

At the start of this new academic year, we're not only continuing to visit students with food parcels, but we're also pleased to be able to **start in-person events** once again. We don't know for sure how the year is going to pan out, but God does – and He's shown us that our restrictions don't limit His work. The gospel hasn't been locked down and never will be.

You can contact Saotra & Élodie at srajao22@gmail.com and can find out more about AEM at amisdesetudiantsdumonde.org

Encouragements in Romorantin

Church members Graham & Pauline Stevens share news about one of their young people

In the March 2021 issue of *France Mission Perspectives*, you may remember us writing: "One of our young people, Adrien, is studying at Geneva Bible Institute and we are grateful that he is growing in his faith. (Wonder where God will lead him after he completes his studies?!)" Well, we're now quite a lot closer to having an answer to that question!



Adrien with his IBG certificate

Having finished his studies in Geneva, Adrien is hoping to spend a practical year with *Foyer Évangélique Universitaire* (FEU), an organisation that supports students in various French university cities. An **internship with FEU** involves the following kind of activities:

- Campus evangelism
- Discipleship for Christian students
- Developing links with local churches and with university societies
- Providing hospitality for students
- Increasing campus visibility for FEU



- Encouraging students to discover the Bible
- Connecting students with partner churches
- Service within a local church
- Personal spiritual growth

Give thanks for Adrien's desire to serve in this way and **please pray** for the Lord's leading and provision.



Essentielles

In terms of church news, although we're concerned that there are still some folk we haven't seen back since lockdown, we're praising the Lord that another three people were recently baptized here in Romorantin. Please give thanks for this **new life**. We're planning an **evangelistic gospel concert** on Saturday 20th November with the group Essentielles (see [youtube.com/user/ESSENTIELLESTV](https://www.youtube.com/user/ESSENTIELLESTV) to find out more). **Please pray** that lots of unconverted friends and families will come along. Thank you!

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



The impact of a church weekend away

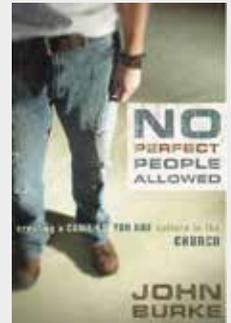


An update from missionaries Jonathan & Rachel Vaughan at Paris-Cardinet

At Paris-Cardinet we've had an encouraging start to the new school year. We enjoyed a sunny weekend away on the theme of being a **community of grace**, where people with no prior experience of church can feel welcome and accepted. This is a key element in reaching Parisians with no knowledge of God, and often complicated or "messy" personal lives. They need to see the gospel in action; they need the chance to experience gospel community over a period of time, as they slowly journey towards faith. Nathan Millet,

to church: *No Perfect People Allowed* by John Burke.

One outcome of the weekend was the impetus to start up a number of **small groups**. These will run on alternate weeks to the existing midweek church Bible study. We want people to have the opportunity to honestly share their struggles and actively seek to encourage one another to grow in godliness, being transformed by the gospel. Being honest with each other reminds us of our own need for grace, and we pray this will encourage a culture of grace in the church. **Please pray** for these groups, for building trust, for mutual encouragement and for spiritual growth.



Church weekend away (no obligation to wear masks outdoors)

pastor of the Le Pré church, led three sessions, drawing on his experience at My Gospel Church (mygospel.church – part of the Perspectives network) and a book that was foundational for their approach

You can contact Jonathan & Rachel at jony.vaughan@gmail.com



A new French megachurch

Paul Cooke reports on the development of the *Église Martin Luther King* in Créteil

Most of France's 2,500 churches will have a modest Sunday attendance of less than 100. Among churches in the Perspectives network, the average may be closer to half that figure. That's fine: smaller churches can generate wonderfully warm fellowships where everyone feels like part of an extended family. But there's also an important role for larger churches in God's economy. One of the largest in France is the *Église Martin Luther King* (MLK) in Créteil, a town of over 92,000 people just 7 miles south-east of the centre of Paris, and capital of the Val-de-Marne department. Although I don't know the church personally, I was intrigued by the media reports that accompanied the opening of its new premises last month and thought readers might also be interested to learn more.

MLK is part of the Assemblies of God denomination (*Assemblées de Dieu* or ADD in French). The ADD account for 16% of France's evangelical churches – the largest share of any denomination – and play a major role in the CNEF (National Council of French Evangelicals). Many of

its churches would correspond closely to the model of classic Pentecostalism. But MLK deliberately cultivates a more open position, signalled by the fact that it's one of the rare ADD churches that also belongs to the FPF (French Protestant Federation).

MLK's lead pastor is Ivan Carluer. He grew up in a traditional Pentecostal church in Brittany and trained as an economics teacher. Although he planted an ADD



Ivan Carluer, from interview in *Info chrétienne*.
Read more at bit.ly/3ClvAcb



Main auditorium



The new complex from the outside



Inauguration Sunday, L to R: Ivan Carluer (MLK), Christian Blanc (CNEF), René Delattre (ADD), Georges Michel (FPF)

church in Créteil with a handful of members in 2004, he continued to work as a teacher for the next nine years. But, as the church grew, he made the move from bi-vocational ministry to full-time pastoring. Growth meant having to change premises in 2008 and again in 2017 before embarking on the major building project that was inaugurated on 11th September 2021.

The name Martin Luther King was adopted by the new church to align with its core values of grace, diversity, transparency, and innovation. Dr King, of course, was not a Pentecostal; rather, he was a Baptist minister associated with liberal theological positions. However, the MLK Church is primarily commemorating his role as an inspirational civil rights leader and as a man who took his faith into the public square.

MLK is deliberately oriented towards its not-yet-Christian neighbours. Built on a site covering

9,000m² and costing over €20m, the complex is owned by the *Fondation du Protestantisme* (fondationduprotestantisme.org) who let its rooms and sports facilities to various organisations during the week. The town authorities of Créteil provide subsidies for the non-religious part of the centre's activities. And the French Minister of the Interior even recorded a short video for MLK's inauguration service in which he underlined "how much, France's Protestants, whatever their origins, are helping the Republic improve every day"! A welcome change of tone from some of his comments earlier in the year...

MLK currently runs two in-person Sunday services in its auditorium that seats 1000+. But its YouTube channel has over 43,000 subscribers! Half of the church's resources are therefore devoted to its role as a local church (*MLK Grand Paris*) and the other half to supporting its online community (*MLK chez vous*). The church aims to be genuinely multicultural and to be relevant to all social categories. As Ivan Carluer put it in a recent interview: "We believe in an evangelicalism open to all, where people can think, debate, and go deeper. We don't want to put off well-qualified people with pat answers."

It's proving a popular approach: the church has grown from 20 to 2,000 over the past 17 years and the average age of attendees is 28 (two thirds women, one third men). Whether or not you'd personally enjoy belonging to a church like MLK, **please pray** that the Lord will use it to draw many people to Himself over the years ahead.

The information in this article has largely been drawn from two articles by sociologist Sébastien Fath in *Regards Protestants* (see bit.ly/3kykArD and bit.ly/3ikBVmL) and from the church website (eglisemlk.fr).



A new lead pastor for Loches

Greg Saldi, pastor of the Loches plant in Descartes, shares encouraging news



Greetings from Loches and the Sud Touraine!
September means the *rentrée* here in France. Vacations come to a close, businesses reopen, school starts again, clubs and sports recommence, life gets back to its normal rhythm, and new events launch. This includes church life!

So how has the church in Loches gotten back to normal or launched something new? This September we welcome a **new lead pastor, Michel Pinto**. Michel comes to the church from the Perspectives church of Blois North and will be pastoring two churches, our church in Loches and the Perspectives church in Vendôme.



Michel & Sara Pinto

This year the goal is a simple one: live for God, knowing that He will bless us as the giver of good things. We're blessed to have Michel as the leader of the project, and we feel it's God's will to bring him to us. Michel will lead the team in Loches and work alongside me as pastor of our second site in Descartes. Michel has worked in France



Sara, Laura, and some very cute pets!

for quite a while, is married to Sara and they have one child, Laura. **Pray along with us for Michel**, his family, and our church here in Loches.

We continue to live with and through the **Covid pandemic**. Churches are allowed to meet as long as everyone not leading is masked. There is no capacity cap at the service and vaccination passes are not required. While the normal would be optimal, it's a blessing that we're able to continue to meet and

“We're blessed to have Michel as the leader of the project, and we feel it's God's will to bring him to us.”

we hope to be there in this uncertain time for people who are looking for certain responses.

We **thank you**, with all of our hearts, for the blessing you are to us. We thank you for your prayers and generous giving toward our church.

You can contact Greg at greg.saldi@gmail.com and Michel at michelkry@gmail.com



Other news from Paul Cooke

Loches P.S.

I echo Greg's thanks at the end of the previous article, because the generosity of France Mission supporters has made it possible to support Michel and his family during this period of transition. Here's some additional news I recently received from a member of the church in Loches:

“We've moved to a Saturday evening service at 5.30pm in Loches so that Michel



can be with us on Saturdays and in Vendôme on Sundays. This is a wonderful provision for the church in Loches and by moving the services to a Saturday we're also hoping that will provide opportunities to organise events before/after the services. We're excited to see how the Lord will lead us to reach the locals. The town of Loches is empty on a Sunday morning whereas last Saturday there were a lot of passers-by looking into our building probably intrigued as to what was going on inside!”

Education Fund

Including the money supplied by France Mission to match your generous donations, the fund now stands at nearly £23,000. The Trustees have recently agreed all the

necessary procedures for administering the fund, so I've started inviting



Photo by Christopher Bill on Unsplash

applications. Before long, I hope to be able to provide updates on how the fund is being used to further the Lord's work in France.

Nascent church plant in Clichy

Dave & Mary Brown are in the very early stages of developing a new church plant (with Perspectives) in the Parisian suburb of Clichy. This is at the very other end of the scale from MLK (see pages 12–13)! You can find out more at egliseclichy92.fr. France Mission has helped with some of the initial costs, and I look forward to providing more news in a future issue. **Please pray** for this venture.

Église protestante évangélique de Clichy-la-Garenne

Un groupe évangélique en cours de création
Actuellement nous proposons :

- des cultes en français ;
- une église totalement gratuite de découverte de la Bible par Zoom.

Notre premier culte en présentiel

dimanche 3 octobre à 10h30

à l'Hôtel Holiday Inn de la Porte de Clichy

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!

