



PERSPECTIVES

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Paul's Page: Moving

Reflections by Paul Cooke, France Mission's UK Director

For Sarah and I, 2026 has been dominated by a **house move**. It's meant selling up in Exeter, leaving our church and friends of nearly 30 years, and starting a new life 250km away. If you've ever had to do something similar, you'll know that it can be quite stressful! In a small way, it enables me to imagine a little more easily what it might have been like for the Israelites to wander around through the wilderness or be taken into exile in Babylon. It's at times like these that our trust in **God's faithfulness** is both stretched and confirmed, when we can say with David: *"Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies"* (Psalm 36.5).

Others featured in this issue of the magazine are **no strangers to moving**. Charlie & Maria Vogt (pages 8-9) moved from Germany to Marseille just last month. Rachel Calvert (page 3) and family moved from Blois to Paris only a year ago. Dave

Brown (pages 4-5) has started four different church plants with Mary in various parts of France over the decades. And Christian & Kathryn Panès (pages 6-7) have had three different homes in as many years!

Sarah and I moved for family reasons (nothing wrong with that, of course!), but all the others I've just mentioned have moved for more specifically **gospel reasons**. And Jesus says: *"no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields – along with persecutions – and in the age to come eternal life"* (Mark 10.29-30).

Not all of us are called to leave. For many of us, the call may well be to stay and serve where we are. But part of our privilege, then, is to support those who are called to leave various things behind. **Thank you** for helping to supply the "hundred-fold" blessings that gospel workers receive from those who share with them.

Every blessing in Christ

Paul



Paul Cooke

Cover photo:
Les Courmettes: A Rocha France's field centre in the hills above Nice



Photo by Dina Badamshina on Unsplash



In the chaos, God can be trusted

Reflections by Rachel Calvert,
Chair of the Board of A Rocha France



God calls us to faithfulness in hard times. Often, He uses difficulty and uncertainty to call us into deeper dependence on Him, while times of abundance and ease can tempt us to coast spiritually. The **repeated heatwaves and fires** of these last few months raise important questions about the posture and vocation of the Church, whether in France or elsewhere. Where is our hope? Do we trust in our savings to protect us, or in our government or our insurance companies?

How will Christians in the West respond to the **increasing instability and unpredictability** of our climate, with the cascading effects we've begun to see on biodiversity, agriculture, food supplies, health, transport, and employment? For children born during the last 12 months, 2026 may turn out to be one of the mildest, gentlest summers of their lifetime. Because heatwaves and extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and more intense.

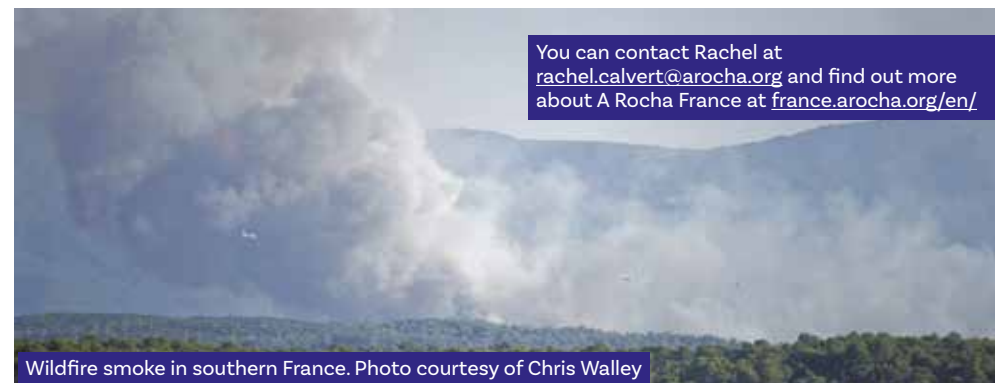
Will we respond by desperately hanging on to our wealth and our privileges for as long as we can? Or will we respond with **generous faith and hospitality**? And what might it look like if we do?

These are questions with which we are wrestling at A Rocha France. As we seek to live faithfully ourselves, caring for God's creation at our two field centres, Les Courmettes and Le Mas Mireille. And as we teach and write on subjects relating to Christian faith and the environment. **Please pray** for us, and for the whole Church in France; that we would respond faithfully and courageously to the challenges of our time. Knowing that the gospel speaks into the upheavals we are experiencing, and that God can be trusted.



Ringling a bird at Le Mas Mireille

You can contact Rachel at rachel.calvert@arocha.org and find out more about A Rocha France at france.arocha.org/en/



Wildfire smoke in southern France. Photo courtesy of Chris Walley



Celebrating 50 years in Vandœuvre



Church planter Dave Brown reports on a milestone anniversary

My wife and I arrived in Nancy on 22nd July 1974. A famous verse in Zechariah tells us not to despise **small beginnings** for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin. There were no fanfares that day as we moved into our little council flat ("HLM"). I'd left my position as a French teacher in a Bristol comprehensive school for a modest job teaching in a small language school. After my conversion in the Bristol University CU and time spent with OM (Operation Mobilisation) in France, I knew that I was called to live in France and help out in a local church. But, in God's providence, things turned out rather differently.

A Bible study started meeting in our home with several students and young professionals, and after a few months we were led to start a regular Sunday morning service in our flat. **Peter & Liz Farley**, the couple who originally set up France Mission Trust, suggested that we should apply to join France-Mission (as Perspectives was called at that time). The Paris committee were at first rather reticent (after all, we weren't being sent out from the UK as missionaries!) but very soon, in the summer of 1976, they informed us that God had convinced them to accept us to develop a church in the suburb of Nancy called Vandœuvre-lès-Nancy. This was a place with an interesting mix of people, with social housing and the science and medical faculties of the University.

From the beginning, **God's providence** was very real. I went to see a property developer I'd met at the language school, and within ten minutes he offered me a flat in Vandœuvre, a place to rent for our Sunday morning services, and permission to have a Bible bookstall in the shopping centre!

But church-planting is **also a challenge**. I lived through these humble beginnings with my first wife, Jan, who lost her life in a road accident during my first year of ministry with France-Mission. In God's kindness I remarried a year later. Mary



A very early meeting in the Browns' flat of what would become the Vandœuvre church

"From the beginning, God's providence was very real."



An OM team in Vandœuvre in 1980

and I have now been together for 48 years and have seen His leading as we've moved on to other church plants and wider ministry, including writing books, working with students, and at the present time church revitalisation.

So it was with **much emotion** that we went back to Nancy for the weekend of the 5th-6th June, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Vandœuvre church. It was also a bit nostalgic to be walking the streets of the city where we'd brought up our four children.

On the Saturday, after an afternoon in the park where a game was organised to enable the participants to discover the history of the church, we returned to the church building for a time of official celebration with **local dignitaries**.



Inside the church today

On Sunday morning the service was very well attended with many people who'd been in the church at one time or another. Over the 50 years there have only been **four pastors** – me as the church planter, François Longeron, Olivier Reber, and Jean-Ho Park. It was a delight to all be on the platform together to pray for the church. I had the privilege of preaching from 1 Corinthians 2 which echoed my experience: *"When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus and him crucified."*



Dave and Mary

You can contact Dave & Mary at david.brown.paris@gmail.com. As Jean-Ho Park has very recently moved on from Vandœuvre to take over as the pastor of the Perspectives church in Taverny, **please pray** that the Lord will lead pastor number 5 to Vandœuvre.



L to R: Jean-Ho Park, Olivier Reber, François Longeron, Dave Brown



Back in beautiful Burgundy

Christian & Kathryn Panès share about their next phase of ministry



This summer, following our time at the Bible Institute in Geneva, we moved as a family to Auxerre where **Christian is continuing his training** with David Shutes, pastor of the Perspectives church in the town. We've been members of this church for several years now. The first time we attended the church was back in 2010 when Kathryn's late father, David, found the (then France-Mission) church contact details and address. Kathryn then contacted the pastor, Chris Lloyd (now recently retired after over 30 years of service in France), and we got to know him and his wife Fiona, David & Silvia Shutes, and others in the church, some of whom are still here today. Christian was born in and lived for over 40 years in a small town 45 minutes from Auxerre. It was a great joy when the Lord opened the door for us to come back here to Auxerre, to serve with brothers and sisters we've known and loved

for many years, and also to get to know those who've joined more recently.

This year, we seek to see where our roles in the church will be in the future following prayerfully Proverbs 19.21 as we seek the Lord's will and as Christian learns alongside David and the rest of the pastoral team. We have a **heart for youth ministry** and see how the Lord has blessed the church this year with around 20 children and young people attending on Sundays. The church actively supports an orphanage in Madagascar, there are various outreach events throughout the year, there's a house group, a discipleship group, and weekly Bible studies on Zoom.

We've moved into the **apartment in the church building** which is lovely and has a beautiful view over Auxerre. Around 2016, France Mission helped establish the



Outside the Auxerre church



Inside the Auxerre church



Christian and Robert at work on the flat

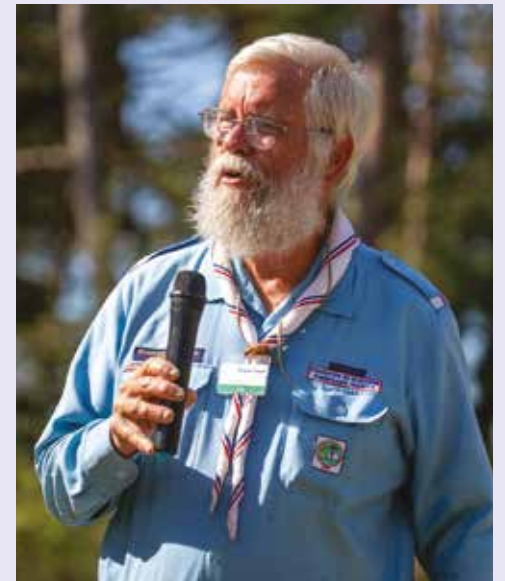
connection with a team from Belmont Exeter and the church here at Rue des Images. They carried out renovation work in what is now our kitchen/living room. This room was used last year as a studio apartment as it has a kitchen area, living room area, and small bathroom. If any of you who were on the team happen to be reading this article, we'd like to thank you very much for the work carried out.

The rest of our apartment has been undergoing **renovation work**. During the first week in June, several people in the church came to lend a hand. Kathryn's mother, Eleanor, and her husband Robert came over from Northern Ireland for the last two weeks in August to help – which was greatly appreciated. Robert and Christian put up stud walls for bedrooms and carried out many other important tasks.

Christian and I are **cub scout leaders** of the local evangelical group (the EEF CALEB group). The leaders and many participants come from various local churches, but

“It was a great joy when the Lord opened the door for us to come back here to Auxerre.”

there are also children and young people who come from homes where they never hear the gospel. David Shutes started up this local scout group again in 2021 and, since then, numbers have been growing. We had our Open Day on 26th September, where young people, church members, family, and friends were welcome to come and discover a little bit more about us and what we do.



David Shutes on scout duty

We'd **appreciate your prayers** for us as a family as we settle into this new chapter that God has prepared for us, bearing in mind the words of Galatians 6.9: *“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”* Thank you.

You can contact Kathryn & Christian at c.panes@laposte.net and find out more about the Auxerre church at epeauxerre.fr; to learn more about the evangelical scout movement in France go to eclaireurs-evangeliques.fr.



Mission in Marseille

Missionaries Charlie & Maria Vogt introduce themselves



Who we are

Hi, we're Charlie & Maria Vogt. Charlie is from Mulhouse, France, and Maria is from Strood, England. We met in Exeter (at the same church where Paul Cooke was also a member), then, after our wedding, spent three years in London before moving to south-west Germany (Schwenningen) for two years. At the start of September 2026, we moved to Marseille with our two young children. We're here with Perspectives and the Liebenzell Mission to work on the Actes 13 Marseille project, building bridges between the Church in France, England, and Germany as well as sharing the gospel with people in Marseille.

Actes 13 Marseille

Working with the Perspectives church in Saint-Just, and the pastor there, Paul Gabbrielli, the aim of this project is to provide missionary training and to plant evangelical churches in parts of Marseille where there currently aren't any. Although a city of 886,000 inhabitants, Marseille only has 30 churches that are part of the CNEF (the French equivalent of the Evangelical Alliance in the UK), meaning only one evangelical church per c.30,000 inhabitants. In comparison, London has an average of one evangelical church per c.3,000 inhabitants.

"Actes 13 Marseille: building bridges between the Church in France, England, and Germany as well as sharing the gospel with people in Marseille."



View over Marseille

The Liebenzell Mission Link

Our work in Marseille is also part of a wider initiative called AS2M (Apostolische Straße Metz to Marseille) which is a partnership between evangelicals in France and Germany to plant churches and establish training centres in eastern France from Metz through various cities including Marseille. As part of the project, we're hoping to attract and train people from the UK and Germany through short-term mission programmes for work in the French Church. Liebenzell Mission runs a gap-year programme called "Impact-Move", part of which involves the participants completing a short-term mission in another country for three months of the year. From January 2027 we will have an Impact Base in Marseille, and three Impact-Move participants (Impactlers) will come to Marseille to participate in local church work and share the gospel alongside local Christians. We hope to build links, through France Mission, to provide this opportunity for British young people as well.

Baueinsatz

From 9th-15th August, Charlie went to Marseille to co-lead a camp of volunteer work in the buildings belonging to the Saint-Just church in Marseille. With a team of five volunteers from Germany and about the same number from France, we were able to fix a leaking roof, install air conditioning units, and restore a wall. Our time together as a team was blessed throughout with evenings hearing testimonies from church members and enjoying outings to discover Marseille and the surrounding areas. But the thing I (Charlie) enjoyed witnessing most was seeing people from very different horizons – mountain people from the Black Forest in Germany and coastal people from the Mediterranean – coming together to serve the one Church of Jesus Christ. Even

though our languages are different, it was great to see that through the gospel and our common goal of making Jesus known among all nations, we could laugh with each other, understand each other, and give each other words of encouragement. Praise God for having made this week possible!



Community space above the worship area



Worship service at Saint-Just

How you can pray for us

Please pray that we would settle in well in Marseille and establish good connections with Christians in Saint-Just and other local evangelical churches. **Please pray** for smooth administrative changes for us as a family and for the financial support needed for us to continue our work here. **Please pray** that people would hear the gospel and that through the work of the Holy Spirit God's kingdom would grow here in Marseille.

You can contact Charlie & Maria at charlie.vogt@liebenzell.org. To see a video in which pastor Paul Gabbrielli introduces Actes 13 Marseille, go to bit.ly/46uy9zl.



Volunteering at Les Courmettes



Student Jonty Donald reports on his experience with A Rocha France

Hello! I'm 19 years old and have just moved from Sevenoaks to Cardiff to study medicine. However, having enjoyed A-level French, I spent my **gap year** in France. After working in a pub and spending some time at a language school in Montpellier, I decided to try something completely new and exciting – volunteering at Les Courmettes, A Rocha's field centre in the south of France. Other than French, I really enjoy reading, art, photography, hiking, and now cooking as well!

I initially knew very little about Les Courmettes when France Mission put me in touch with them. However, as I wanted to **improve my French**, especially within a Christian community, it seemed a good fit for me. In the end, this experience did so much more than simply improve my French; it allowed me to make amazing friendships, meet many different people, have conversations about God and His creation which have completely changed

my outlook on the world, and so much more. For all of this I'm eternally grateful.

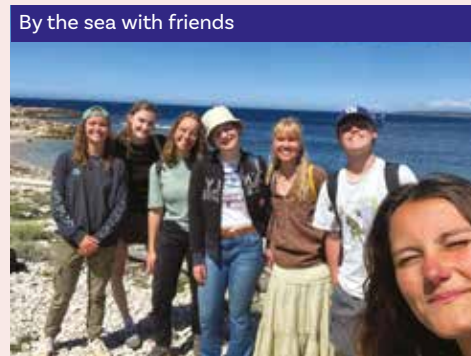
From the moment that I came to Les Courmettes, I felt extremely welcome, and was so pleased to see how close everyone in this community was, demonstrating the love and care that Jesus taught us to have for our brothers and sisters. Most mornings, we had the option of **reading the Bible together and praying**, reflecting on what God wanted for our lives and how to represent Him. I found this to be a great start to every morning, with His name in our mind right from the off, being the daily bread we needed.

We never ate alone: we sang and prayed before every meal and recognised the importance of taking the time to rest, laugh, and eat with friends and family. Even in the cleaning up after every meal, there was a **sense of togetherness**, as everyone joined in and made the most of each other's company. During my stay,



Les Courmettes

By the sea with friends



many different groups came every week – churches, different A Rocha communities etc. – and from each, I had the pleasure of meeting a wide range of amazing people who taught me so much, and, despite their different backgrounds, they were all united in one thing: their faith in God.

As a volunteer, I spent time doing **many different jobs**, including being in the kitchen, where I got to work with two chefs and the cook. It was here where my French could really progress. After a couple of days, I could name almost any kitchen item in French; it was a full immersion. I also spent time helping with housework, painting, setting up the marquee for weddings, and mowing the grass. However, I could do other things on my days off – go to the beach with friends, visit nearby towns, etc. On my last day, I went to the shepherd's hut, which was truly an extraordinary experience.

In learning a new language, you become like a child again, as you slowly discover a new world of different words and cultural practices. At Les Courmettes, I often had this feeling: with my French; learning more about cuisine from the kitchen; studying the Bible with others; learning about nature through the protocols we followed; and from my friends who were



At the shepherd's hut

"In the end, this experience did so much more than simply improve my French!"



Something Jonty learned to cook

so **fascinated by God's creation** and wanted to share with me all that they knew. I feel so blessed having experienced all of this, especially since I came across Les Courmettes "by chance" following a conversation with France Mission. In French there is an expression: *le hasard avec un grand D* (chance with a capital D); *hasard* means chance or luck and the D is for *Dieu* – God, meaning God was behind it the whole time. And I really do believe that this was the case for me with Les Courmettes.

You can contact Jonty at donaldjonty0@gmail.com and find out more about A Rocha France at france.arocha.org/en/



Spotlight on the Geneva Bible Institute (IBG)

Dave Brown, one of the visiting IBG lecturers, provides an overview



In 1919 a Scotsman called **Hugh Alexander** (1884-1957) opened the first French-speaking Bible school in the Jura part of Switzerland. This was shortly afterwards transferred to Geneva where land was bought in the suburbs of the city, and an impressive building was constructed. They called it l'École Biblique de Genève and the doors of the school were opened in 1928. It was part of a movement called **Action Biblique** which Hugh Alexander had set up to distribute the Bible in francophone Europe and beyond. An important part of this vision was the setting up of a chain of Bible bookshops called *La Maison de la Bible* which are still present in France and Switzerland today. And through these stores, a number of Action Biblique churches also came into existence. Today Action Biblique has 19 churches across France; like Perspectives, they are part of



Hugh Alexander

the Réseau FEF (the network for "classical" evangelical denominations).

However, towards the end of the 1980s it became obvious to the committee of the Bible School that it would no longer be financially viable as a school only intended for members of these **Action Biblique** churches. At the same time, in God's providence, several leaders of evangelical denominations and missions in France were talking about the need to train pastors, in particular church planters, and an agreement was eventually reached whereby they would become partners in running the Bible School under the leadership of **Mike Evans**. Mike had previously led OM (Operation Mobilisation) in France and was the director of the highly significant Billy Graham Mission France in 1986. (In fact, as a member of the committee of France-Mission, Mike was also involved in setting up France Mission Trust in 1974.)

The ten partners in the project included France-Mission (today called Perspectives),



The IBG under construction in 1927



The IBG today



La Maison de la Bible in Paris



Teaching at the IBG

the Open Brethren movement, and the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CAMA), and today 25 other missions and movements are official associates. To mark this **relaunch in 1992**, the name was changed to the Institut Biblique de Genève (IBG).

From the outset, the Institute put great emphasis on keeping a good **balance between theory and practice**. This is ensured in two ways.

The first factor is that much of the teaching is done by **visiting speakers** from among the ranks of the partner organisations so as to keep the reality of local church ministry to the forefront. I personally have been

teaching at the IBG for one or two weeks a year ever since the reopening in 1992, and several other pastors within Perspectives do the same.

The second factor is the way the **training** is structured over a period of four years. The first year is residential, and all the students live on the property (including married couples and their children). Some of the students are enrolled for just this one-year period and can receive a certificate at the end of this initial training and return to their local churches better equipped for some form of ministry. *[Note from Paul Cooke: this was the option chosen by Christian & Kathryn Panès – see pages 6-7.]* The others continue for another three years but are on placement as interns with a local church and mentored by the local pastor. In fact, the IBG runs an annual coaching week which is compulsory for the pastor to attend if the church wishes to receive an intern. However, each year the students return to Geneva three or four times for two or three weeks of intensive study.

Since 1928 **over 2000 students** have been trained at the Institute, including dozens of pastors who ministered in France-Mission or are ministering today in Perspectives. The Institute also hosts an Easter conference for hundreds of young people every other year and the annual conference of Évangile21, the French equivalent of the Gospel Coalition.

You can contact Dave at david.brown.paris@gmail.com.
Go to ibg.cc to find out more about the IBG.
And here are the websites of some of the other organisations mentioned by Dave:
· actionbiblique.fr
· maisonbible.fr
· eglises-perspectives.org
· reseaufef.com
· evangile21.thegospelcoalition.org

“Since 1928 over 2000 students have been trained at the Institute.”



Growing together

An update on Nogent Bible Institute (IBN)
from Rachel Vaughan

Blessed is the one [...] whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water [...]. (Psalm 1.1-3)

For over a century, the Institut Biblique de Nogent has been training students to delve deep into the treasures of God's word. A foundation of Nogent's teaching is that students study every book of the Bible, as well as doctrine, church history, and practical theology. This year, a committee of teachers and board members, in consultation with church leaders and students, will be planning a **reform of the 3-year programme**, to adapt to new challenges and changing needs, while maintaining the heart of the Institute's mission: the whole of Christ, in the whole Bible, for the whole world. **Please do pray for them**, in particular for a day of reflection to seek God's guidance on 11th November. Pray for a united vision and wisdom, that these changes would help recruit and train more students for a life of faithful service.

The Lebanon Cedar that stands in the grounds of the Institute is a fitting illustration of this psalm. Many changes have occurred during its lifetime, with the construction of three new buildings on-site over the last 50 years. The **ongoing renovation work** to the older buildings is a lengthy process but, as with the academic reform, is a vital investment for future generations. We're grateful for volunteer workers and financial gifts that



IBN staff and students 2025-26



IBN's historic building with new roof

make these renovations possible. We've received planning permission for the next major renovation (roof repairs and thermal insulation of a building), but we still need to raise at least €170,000 to begin work. **Please do pray** for God's provision.

And finally, **praise God** for his provision of a new full-time teacher, **Jessica Abe**, who will move here with her family in September 2027. Several of the Institute's teaching staff are close to retirement, so this is a wonderful answer to prayer.

You can contact Rachel at rachel.vaughan@ibnogen.org and can find out more about the IBN ibnogen.org. If you'd like to support the renovations programme financially, gifts can be made through France Mission. Please specify IBN Building Project.



News in brief from Paul Cooke

New contact details

Following our move from Exeter, please note that France Mission now has a **new postal address**. Here it is:

PO Box 560, Teddington TW11 1FD

I've set up a redirection service for any mail being sent to the previous Exeter PO Box, but please use the new response envelopes with the new PO Box address from now on. If you receive the magazine through the post, you'll receive a new Freepost envelope with this issue.

FM also has a **new landline number**: 020 8412 7896. My mobile number and email address remain unchanged.

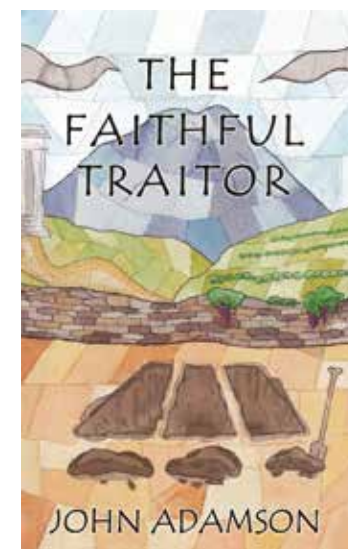


A good Christmas present?



John Adamson

FM Area Rep John Adamson's most recent "biblical novel" focuses on Elijah. It's called **The Faithful Traitor**: "An unexpected visitor from his hometown brings more than memories of childhood to Eran. Already suffering banishment by his traitorous family, he accepts a legacy of bitterness and isolation. Yahweh's faithfuls are trapped by the despotic, authoritarian regime of Ahab and Jezebel. Eternal truths are decried, distorted and denied as their stormy relationship brings chaos, uncertainty and fear, through idolatry, immorality, torture and murder. The Lord chooses Elijah for the dauntingly high-risk mission of confronting these traitors to His people and His covenant. He threatens justice, but will He ever deliver?" If you'd like a copy, either for yourself or perhaps as a Christmas present for somebody else, please either use the response form that came with the magazine or email me at paulcooke@francemission.org.



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) 020 8412 7896
- Post: PO Box 560, Teddington TW11 1FD, UK

Support France Mission when you shop online

We've registered with two websites – **easyfundraising** and **Give as you Live** – 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 bit.ly/FM-GAYL and help us raise more funds to support the Lord's work in France.

Thank you!



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