

PERSPECTIVES

No. 21 | Autumn 2025 | www.francemission.org

Registered Charity 1176433



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Paul's Page: French Evangelicals under fire

Reflections by Paul Cooke, France Mission's Director

On 25th September, the state-owned TV channel France 2 broadcast a 50-minute report on French evangelicals as part of its flagship *Envoyé spécial* programme. The documentary was entitled "Evangelicals: a not-so-angelic success story?"



The CNEF (National Council of French Evangelicals) immediately issued a **press release** expressing its "shock" about the documentary. Here are the central paragraphs:

*This report is a **clear attack** on evangelical Protestantism and the Christian faith as a whole. Equating evangelicalism with an "ultraconservative", homophobic movement, and presenting it primarily through biased editorial decisions, amounts to stigmatising the 1.2 million evangelical Protestants in France and, more broadly, all French Christians. We also deplore the questionable journalistic methods: leading questions, one-sided editing without consulting any experts, shortcuts, and conflation. These methods create suspicion and fuel unfounded prejudices; they constitute fertile ground for discrimination and stigmatisation.*

*As should be true for everyone, the CNEF demands recognition of our freedom of conscience, thought, and religion. The law protects **freedom of belief**, and we are proud to believe in the God we encounter in the Bible: a living, loving God, still acting concretely today in response to prayer. In this, we defend our biblical convictions, our freedom to pray, and to accompany each person in a chosen, fulfilling, and authentically lived faith. In this sense, we are committed, in conjunction with Miviludes [the French organisation charged with monitoring cults], to a fight against sectarian excesses and against conversion therapies.*

The CNEF has contacted the French Ministry of the Interior with its concerns, so it will be interesting to see what response they receive. Of course, as Christians, we shouldn't be surprised about opposition. As Jesus said: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16.33). **Please pray** that the Lord will use the debates around the documentary to draw more people to Himself as curious onlookers explore French evangelical churches for themselves.

Every blessing in Christ

Paul



Paul Cooke

Front page photo: Joint weekend away for Paris Cardinet and Clichy churches



All change, please!

Missionary Peter Calvert reports on a season of major change for the family



A month ago, Rachel and I lived in a large old house in the historic centre of a **provincial market town on the banks of the Loire** with our three school-age daughters and I was ministering in a small church in a rural town 45 minutes' drive away, with a significant amount of my time devoted to running the local evangelical scout group.

Then, at the end of August, the Lord called "All change, please!" and now we're living in a much smaller, newly converted flat on the second floor of the church building where I'm now the pastor, surrounded by modern houses in the **north-eastern suburbs of Paris**. Two of our daughters are no-longer living with us, I've handed on the leadership of the scout group, and my journey to church on a Sunday consists of sliding down the banisters!

"Our brothers and sisters at the church of Le Blanc-Mesnil have welcomed us with open arms."

That's quite a lot to get used to. But the Lord has been gracious to us. Our brothers and sisters at the church of Le Blanc-Mesnil have welcomed us with open arms. Our flat, though not completely finished, is very comfortable. We're enjoying getting to know our new, **very multicultural town**, and although we miss our two elder daughters, we're happy to hear their



Sylvain (left) is handing over to Peter as pastor of the church to focus on his ministry as chaplain to Paris' two main evangelical theological colleges

news regularly and watch their progress from afar.

And then there's what hasn't changed. The Lord Jesus remains the same, yesterday, today and forever. His gospel and His Word remain the same. Rachel and I are still happily married and intend to remain so, till death do us part. **We're also grateful** that so many of our prayer and financial supporters have stuck with us through the ups, downs, and sidesteps of our ministry in France over the last 20+ years. Please continue to remember us to the Lord in this time of transition, with all its joys and challenges, that we might persevere in love and good deeds for His glory.

You can contact Peter & Rachel at piererachel.calvert@gmail.com



A visit to Marseille

FM supporters Guy & Helen Troup report on an encouraging weekend



Hi there. We're Guy & Helen Troup from Catford, southeast London. We've been France Mission supporters for around 10 years now. We're members at New Life Church Catford, a vibrant, multi-cultural church plant in the London Borough of Lewisham. Helen lived in Germany for a few years, I lived in France for one year, and we're both fans of continental Europe.

We arranged to visit **Marseille Saint-Louis church** in September 2025 to meet the church family and to find out more about ministry in Marseille. The church building is in the northern part of Marseille, about a 50-minute bus ride from the city centre. It's a poorer part of the city and many Muslims live there.

The Sunday Service was very familiar with prayers, Bible readings, songs, and a sermon, apart from it all being in French! Helen doesn't speak much French, but she was able to follow along by using an app on her phone which translated into English for her. The church family was **diverse in age and ethnicity**, and they had several children and youth in attendance which was great to see.

"The community and love in the church were very evident."

Thierry Steux (officially retired as pastor of the church but still very much involved) led the service and made us feel very welcome. At the service we also met an



Outside the church



Lunch chez Thierry & Laurence

American lady who works for a Christian charity and an Iranian refugee who the church is looking after. The community and love in the church were very evident.

After the service, Thierry and his wife Laurence invited us to their flat for Sunday lunch. This was a **wonderful time of fellowship** and getting to know each other which took up most of the afternoon, in classic French style!

On the following Monday we were invited to Serge & Michelle's home for a meeting.

Michelle was one of the church's first converts and her husband Serge is now an Elder in the church. Simon Allchin, who along with his wife Radia are an additional pastoral couple in the church, also joined us. They told us that they were



Thierry leading the service



The Saint-Louis congregation

encouraged by the growth among the church, the love and unity amidst diversity, and the fact that there are lots of families and young people in the church. In this way it's similar to our church in Catford.

We asked them what **challenges** they're facing. They told us they'd like a bigger church building, but this is very difficult because of the prohibitive cost and lack of available buildings. Another challenge is raising up the next generation of church leaders. It doesn't seem like anyone wants



Michelle, Helen, Serge, Guy, Simon, Thierry (L to R)

to take on the baton at the moment. A third challenge is reaching the large Muslim population living in Saint-Louis. The peer pressure from the wider Muslim community means that it's very difficult and costly for Muslims to attend church.

Despite these challenges the team at Saint-Louis are heartened by the **collaboration between different evangelical churches** in Marseille (they organised a city-wide gospel outreach last summer culminating in a concert in one of the city's venues) and by the many natural evangelists within the church family.

Overall, we were very uplifted by our visit to Marseille. As He promised, **Jesus is building His church** (Matthew 16:18) and it's a joy to experience fellowship in a different country and language which makes the unity we have in Christ even more real.

Please pray for:

- A new church building
- Ongoing every-member service in the Saint-Louis church
- A new young pastoral couple to join the church
- Muslims in the Saint-Louis district to be saved
- More gospel collaboration between Marseille churches

You can contact Guy & Helen at guy.troup@hotmail.com



Introducing CERIE

Missionary Rachel Vaughan explains the importance of this new Centre



Last year, the Institut Biblique de Nogent-sur-Marne (IBN) and the Groupes Bibliques Universitaires (GBU) launched the Centre d'Enseignement et de Recherche Interdisciplinaire Évangélique (CERIE), a Centre for interdisciplinary research and training in sciences, culture, and theology.



CERIE
Sciences, culture et
théologie en dialogue

This new initiative is the fruit of **15 years of collaboration between IBN and GBU**, developing evangelical professional networks within diverse fields, such as the natural sciences, humanities, arts,



Lydia Jaeger and Yohann Tourne at the Saint-Brieuc training weekend

education, environment, and healthcare. CERIE aims to reach a much wider audience, bridging the gap between the church and contemporary culture by equipping Christians of all ages to engage with societal issues.

CERIE has **three main areas of activity**:

- **Resources** – a variety of formats (videos, articles, small-group packs, youth resources) covering themes such as identity, transhumanism, and ecology
- **Training** – with monthly webinars on topics ranging from education and the justice system to neo-paganism, as well as in-person events in churches across France
- **Research** – we held our first interdisciplinary symposium on Fake News earlier this year and, in September, we launched a new Postgraduate Certificate in Theology, Science and



CERIE's Directors: Yohann Tourne, Lydia Jaeger, and Rachel Vaughan



A recent online CERIE training event

Contemporary Thought, in partnership with the Evangelical Theological Seminary at Vaux-sur-Seine

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3.15).

CERIE's mission is to **equip churches** so that they can convey the gospel message of hope in a rapidly changing world, a goal that resonates with Perspectives. The first CERIE training event was held at the church in Saint-Brieuc (Brittany) as part of Perspectives' regional training, and we're delighted to be returning for another weekend in November.

Perspectives missionaries play a key role in the new Centre: Rachel Vaughan (Cardinet church) is Director of Operations at CERIE and is particularly involved in creating new resources, as well as overseeing communications and fundraising. Rachel Calvert (Le Blanc-Mesnil) is a member of the advisory board, representing one of CERIE's partner organisations, A Rocha France. And Lydia Jaeger, president of Romainville church council, is Academic Director of CERIE.

Perspectives from CERIE's Leadership:

Lydia Jaeger, CERIE's Academic Director and a lecturer at IBN, emphasises the more fundamental aim of the Centre:

"So that worship is not limited to Sundays, but that every Christian learns to serve and glorify God in their everyday life. In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2.3). This is why the dialogue between science, culture and theology can be so fruitful."

Yohann Tourne, CERIE's Strategic Director and the General Secretary of GBU, highlights the Centre's practical applications:

"At the GBU, we train high-school and university students, as well as professionals, to lead Bible-based discussions for anyone who wants to explore the Christian faith. CERIE equips them with tools to connect their studies and work with their faith, so that they can share the relevance of the biblical message with those around them."

We'd really **appreciate your prayers** in relation to the following areas:

- Praise God for a great team and pray for strength and refreshment for them all
- Praise God for the financial provision to launch the Centre and pray for funding to continue this work
- Please pray for wisdom and inspiration so that CERIE can equip and serve more churches

Thank you for praying for this new initiative!

You can contact Rachel at rachel.vaughan@ibnogent.org

To find out more about CERIE, go to cerie.org

To find out more about the IBN, go to ibnogent.org

To find out more about the GBU, go to gbu.fr/en



Dreams for the Southwest!

Church-planter Arnaud Schrodi shares Perspectives' vision for southwest France

[Note from Paul Cooke: Arnaud is Director of Church-Planting for Perspectives, FM's principal mission partner in France. Until recently he was pastor of the Église de la Krutenau in Strasbourg (which he led since it was planted), but he and his family have now moved to the Bordeaux region to start a strategic new work.]

When I first came to faith, I came across a map of France showing the penetration of the gospel throughout the country. As I studied that map, one thing struck me: **the Southwest of France had very few evangelical churches.** I became particularly interested in the Basque Country. I organised evangelistic camps and worked with the Baptist Federation on a church-planting project. But God very clearly closed the door. It wasn't the right time for me.

25 years later, the reality remains the same. Despite new church plants, the percentage of people reached by the gospel is still very low. In 2024, when Perspectives

asked me to take up the position of Director of Church-Planting, I was reminded of the burden God had given me for this region. I shared my desire to see Perspectives join the existing witness and develop a new project there: **open a new missionary field and launch a true church-planting movement.**

In recent years, several milestones have been laid:

- Paul Monclair and his family were the first pioneers for Perspectives, planting a church in **Montastruc** near Toulouse.
- Later, a church in **Montendre** (60km north of Bordeaux) chose to join Perspectives.



Arnaud, Colette, and their children



Moving day



- More recently, a church plant in the **Médoc** (also to the north of Bordeaux) reached out to Perspectives.

We see in all this the beginnings of a **new Perspectives region** taking shape, one that would reach up as far as Saintes, 120km north of Bordeaux, where Perspectives already has a church, but one that has felt rather geographically isolated. At the Perspectives Congress in May 2025, I publicly announced, in faith, the vision of developing this new region through church plants. The big questions were: how and with whom?

This summer, through very clear signs, God called me and my family to move to the Bordeaux area to lead this project. Our lives were about to be turned upside down. Within a few weeks, **we left everything behind** to respond to God's call and make the great diagonal journey from Strasbourg to Bordeaux.

For the past couple of months, we've been in **Pessac**, a town of 70,000 just outside Bordeaux and home to one of the city's university campuses. Our goal is twofold:

- 1 **Plant a vibrant local church** in Pessac
- 2 **Become a missionary base** to train and

send church-planters throughout the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region

This is a huge project – but such an exciting one! Over these past weeks, we've been amazed at how **God has already prepared the way.** We simply want to be tools in His hands and step into the works He's prepared in advance (Ephesians 2.10)

We're looking for people who will stand with us in this mission. First and foremost, we need **prayer partners.** Please pray for:

- Workers (church planters and team members)
- Open doors in towns and villages
- Favourable reception among other pastors already working in the region
- Hearts open to the gospel
- Wisdom to choose the right locations

We also need **financial partners** to help me be fully invested in this mission field. Finally, we're seeking **team members** to come and strengthen us and join future church-planting teams in the Landes, the Basque Country, and the Béarn. Thank you very much for your prayers for all of this!

You can contact Arnaud at arnaud.schrodi@yahoo.com



Place de la Bourse, Bordeaux



Château Pape Clément, near Pessac, the oldest wine estate in Bordeaux



Evangelism through art

Church-planter Tom Parfitt reflects on the recent biblical art exhibition in Clichy



From 12th-21st September as a church in Clichy we ran the exhibition “*De la Parole à la Peinture*” (From Word to Painting). The story of the Bible is depicted in 21 art works by well-known artists, taking the viewer from Genesis to Revelation, from creation to the new creation. Visitors can enjoy commentary followed by carefully selected musical items on an audio guide. QR codes now even allow people to listen along on their phones, in French, Chinese or English.



The exhibition in situ

friend, Dorian. Jean-Pierre and Dorian spent over two hours taking in the art and the commentary and talking through what they were experiencing. They both really enjoyed their time at the exhibition, and I was able to pray with them after their visit. Dorian took the **exhibition booklet** (generously funded by you, FM supporters!) away with him, and we can only guess at how their discussions went after lunch.

Other friends accepted invitations to the exhibition or to the opening night bash. For us it was a **good opportunity** to invite families we know to something with some Christian content, and four families took us up on it. 80+ people visited the exhibition while it was manned, and undoubtedly many others when it was open but unmanned. We thank God for this opportunity to make the story of redemption known and pray for seeds that were sown or watered to bear fruit.

You can contact Tom at tparfitt.paris@gmail.com



Visitors arriving

The Catholic church allowed us to use space in the **main church building in Clichy**, allowing the exhibition to be open from 8:30-19:30, 7 days a week. The opening night was well attended by members of our church, people from the Catholic parish, friends and a few visiting dignitaries (priest, pastors, local councillor).

On the first full day of the exhibition, I had the joy of welcoming Jean-Pierre, a believer, who brought an unbelieving



Youthful dynamism in Paris Cardinet

Missionary Jonathan Vaughan is encouraged at the start of a new church year



At the end of September, the Perspectives churches in Cardinet and Clichy had a joint **church weekend away** at a retreat house to the south of Paris. We invited **Émile Nicole**, formerly a lecturer in Old Testament at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Vaux, to teach on the subject of Wisdom literature, and in particular the book of Job. It was a joy to listen to this humble man who, after decades studying the Scriptures, explains them so clearly and powerfully. We're grateful to God for this time away together at the start of a new school year.



Émile Nicole



Michaël Girardin

On 15th November we've invited a historian to give a talk on how the Bible texts have come down to us, questions of dating, and the Dead Sea scrolls. **Michaël Girardin** is a specialist on Palestine at the time of the Roman Empire; he's written several books about the details of daily life in New Testament times. We're publicising the event widely; **please pray** that people would come from other evangelical churches, and also from the several large Catholic churches in our area.



Church weekend group photo

Our *collégiens* (11-15s) youth group is on pause for the moment, as there aren't enough teenagers for it to be viable this year. However, there's a **very dynamic young adults' group** (20-30s) which has got going all by itself (Cardinet and Clichy churches together). They meet every fortnight for fellowship and Bible study and have several projects in the works to reach more people with the gospel, including a podcast (one episode already recorded), creative use of social media, and providing practical help to homeless people. The young adults, along with our *collégiens* and *lycéens* (16-18s), will be leading the evening service once a month. **Praise God** for the energy and ideas of our young adults, and **please pray** that this group would bring the good news of Jesus to many.

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



Opportunities to connect

Area Rep Jill Kennedy celebrates some recent highlights

[Note from Paul Cooke: Jill Kennedy is FM's Area Rep in Northern Ireland and does a wonderful job of representing FM at events in the province. Here she reflects on recent highlights of the role.]

Bangor Worldwide is a major annual event in Northern Ireland's church calendar, enabling thousands of people to learn about, pray for, and get involved in God's global purposes. As an exhibitor at Bangor Worldwide's "Global Village" this August, it was stimulating to have the FM stand positioned near other agencies working in similar areas.



My vision of what God is doing in Europe was significantly broadened by conversations with my neighbours from **European Christian Mission**. Conversely, when ECM Ireland's Director, Geoff Donaldson, enquired about Kathryn



Jill chatting with Geoff Donaldson of ECM

Panès, whom he knew, it was good to be able to respond with the article from the Spring 2025 edition of *France Mission Perspectives*.

There's much potential for two-way learning for mission reps positioned adjacently, and, from the point of view of visitors to the two stands, it was good to have our **Why France?** booklet sitting within inches of ECM's key piece of literature, *Why Europe?*

Back in 2016, when I started out as a FM Area Rep, I approached large events like Bangor Worldwide with much less enthusiasm than I do now. The whole set-up was fairly daunting for a volunteer, surrounded by people who for the most part were professionals or employees of the organisation they were representing. For that reason, I've been grateful to be accompanied at the FM stand on occasions over the years by **Megan O'Rourke** and



Emma Sandoval sharing experiences of InterAction camps

Emma Sandoval (née Rutter), both of whom are FM supporters – and indeed past contributors to this magazine! Their ability to chat to teens and 20s & 30s, from their own recent experiences of spending a year abroad as a Christian student or working at InterAction summer camps, is always invaluable.

Another hugely helpful thing as a volunteer, has been joining **Mission Action Partnership (MAP)**, the Northern Ireland wing of Global Connections. I was initially attracted to membership because of the links it promised to open up to the student world in Northern Ireland. It did deliver on that front. However, belonging to MAP has also emerged as a very helpful way for a "non-professional" to become better informed about what is happening throughout the world and about good practice in mission in the 21st century.

"Big MAP" gatherings are arranged three times a year, to allow representatives of member agencies to come together for support and learning. Attendance is entirely optional, but members do tend to prioritise them because they are enormously worthwhile. The two-hour sessions always begin with a short presentation from three agencies. After each of these, members pray informally in groups for that particular area of work.

It's Ireland, so a refreshment break with food and chat is mandatory! This allows not only for **useful networking** but also simply for friendships to develop. So, a much-appreciated side-benefit of MAP membership has been that walking into a large event now means a chance to catch up with people, rather than arrival among a sea of unfamiliar faces.



A Big MAP gathering

The themes which are addressed in the second hour of each gathering are always stimulating. **Recent topics** have included: how we can work together across different cultural backgrounds in mission, feedback and processing of ideas from the Fourth Lausanne Congress, how mission agencies can better engage with and serve local churches in mission.

Attending "Big MAP" is always a joy – energising, collaborative, and very much in the spirit of **Psalm 133.1**: "*How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!*"

You can contact Jill at jillkennedy@francemission.org

To find out more about Bangor Worldwide, go to worldwidemission.org

To learn more about MAP, see globalconnections.org.uk/map

If you'd be interested in seeing how you could support France Mission via your local equivalent of MAP, please contact paulcooke@francemission.org



God taught me to swim!

FM supporter Claude Sammüller shares an encouragement to pray



Photo by Senanur Ceylan on pexels.com

I was born in 1951 in Amnéville, near the French border with Luxemburg, but spent most of my life in South Africa. Now I live in the UK and have been receiving FM's magazine for many years. I share this story hoping that it might encourage others, especially any of my compatriots, to trust in the **power of prayer**.

In 1973, I decided to take my sisters, Martine and Josiane, and my brothers, Jean-Jacques and Christian, to the riverside after Sunday morning church service. I was 23 years old, and my siblings were younger than I. Jean-Jacques had a leg in plaster, and Christian wasn't confident in swimming.

As I stood there, still wearing my Sunday best, I heard the girls screaming their heads off. **Christian was drowning**, and just before his head went under, he cried for help. A fisherman was nearby but too far to see what was happening.

I was the only one who could do something – but, unfortunately, I couldn't swim at all. I said a prayer and decided to trust Jesus – and jump!

“I said a prayer and decided to trust Jesus – and jump!”

The river was cold and muddy. I found myself going down into the water with my eyes open the entire time. Eventually, I touched something with my right hand, and someone said to me, “Hold on to it.” A still, **small voice** also said that I must press my feet side by side and I'd be lifted gently up through the water.

Eventually, I emerged, and an arm came around my neck. A voice asked, “Do you have him?” I said, “Yes,” though I wasn't sure. When the man pulled me out of the river, I had my brother by his hair.

The fisherman had heard the girls screaming and came to the rescue. The same fisherman helped my brother regain consciousness.

At no time did I feel fear. I didn't swallow water, I didn't close my eyes, and I was never out of breath. **I knew that I experienced a miracle that day.**

You can contact Claude at Claudesammuller@gmail.com

News in brief

InterAction camps

Hi, my name's **Harvey Bryan**. I'm a student at the University of Exeter and following my stint as an *animef* (leader in training) last year, I returned to InterAction France this summer to be part of the **catering team**. Although far busier than expected and having pushed my rudimentary culinary skills to the limit, I had a wonderful time learning and serving the camp. It was so much fun to laugh at cakes gone wrong, whipped cream explosions, and enjoy the fellowship that camps bring! I learnt lots from the other volunteer leaders and the chefs who were cooking with me; their selfless service was wonderful to watch. I really enjoyed making delicious meals and seeing lots of hungry faces turn to smiles after busy and active days on the camp. I was able to attend the evening talks, and it was a blessing to hear a Bible overview



Harvey and the other cooks

tracking Jesus our Messiah through the pages of the Gospels all the way to us as we sat listening at camp. I'd highly recommend serving either as a leader, chef or *animef* at InterAction, it's such a great way to serve and to grow and it's such a blessing that the children get to hear the good news explained to them in both English and French! Go for it!

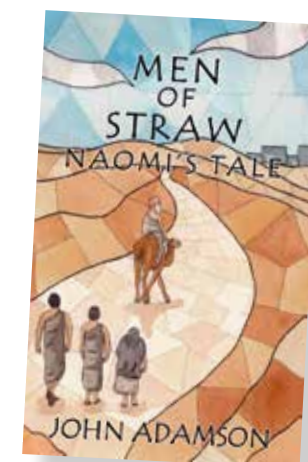
You can contact Harvey at harvey.jabryan@gmail.com and find out more about the camps at interactioncamps.org/en/interaction-france-en

A nice Christmas present?

FM Area Rep John Adamson's fourth novel is called **Men of Straw: Naomi's Tale** and is a modern retelling of the Book of Ruth. John is kindly offering a limited number of **free copies** to FM supporters. It's being marketed as a “good holiday read” (which is true), but it could also make a nice Christmas gift for anyone who might be open to thinking about the God of the Bible. If you'd like a copy, please either use the response form that came with the magazine or email Paul Cooke at paulcooke@francemission.org.



John Adamson



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 **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!

