



PERSPECTIVES

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No rural idyll

Reflections by Paul Cooke, France Mission's Director

As I write, the Salon de l'Agriculture (SIA) has just started at the largest exhibition park in France, on the southwestern edge of Paris. Known as the Paris International Agricultural Show in English, it showcases the best of French farming and is very popular with visitors (who number well over half a million). It is also well known for being a potentially tricky moment in the political calendar.



While Jacques Chirac (President 1995–2007) was clearly in his element at the SIA, François Mitterrand (President 1981–95) assiduously avoided it. Emmanuel Macron is facing considerable unrest around this year's edition. Farmers had already been demonstrating about low wages and anti-pesticide legislation earlier in February; tractors are now again in the streets of Paris and other French cities, blocking roads and dumping manure as farmers



Tractors in Paris with Les Invalides in the background

show their discontent. President Macron proposed a "big debate" at the SIA, but the leaders of farming unions refused to take part in what they saw as a publicity stunt.

Even though agriculture is a relatively small employer in France these days (less than 3% of the workforce) and only accounts for 2% of GDP, France remains the EU's leading agricultural nation and the primary beneficiary of farming subsidies. And yet, as one recent report put it, the industry is in crisis, with farmers being **fewer, older, and poorer** than in previous decades. Tragically, therefore, "in 2020, the rate of suicide among farmers aged 15 to 64 was 43.2% higher than the national average".¹

Political and economic decisions could certainly help improve the lot of French farmers and their rural communities. But, as we know, real hope and security can only be found in Jesus. That's why the task of **creating gospel-centred churches** in France remains so urgent. Not just in the towns and cities, but also in the villages and rural communes like those mentioned in the article about Aix-les-Bains (pages 8–9). May the Lord raise up more workers for this huge harvest field!

Every blessing in Christ

Paul



Paul Cooke

¹See france24.com/en/business/20240124-france-farming-crisis-in-numbers.

Front page photo: Regional youth weekend at the Orangerie de Beauregard



Time for another Boost

Missionary Peter Calvert asks you to pray for a regional youth weekend



Many thanks to all those who prayed for the *Week-end Boost* that we launched last year for the young people of the Perspectives churches in **France's Central region**. Over 50 young people aged between 12 and 18 joined in, accompanied in many cases by youth leaders from their churches. Perspectives pastor Joël Fluckiger led the main meetings on the theme of hope. Not only did we have a lot of fun together, but many young people told us that they'd been spiritually impacted by the Bible talks, workshops, testimonies, and worship times.

Joel Fluckiger teaching on biblical hope



This year, from **3rd to 5th May**, we're back in the beautiful setting of the Orangerie de Beauregard campsite,* near Tours, run by a lovely British Christian couple. We're hoping to build on the success of last year's pioneering event. Many young people in the churches of the region are quite isolated, knowing only a handful of others their age who go to church, if that.



Courtyard game

So, **our prayer** is that this weekend would:

1. be a time when new spiritual friendships are formed and others strengthened;
2. give young people who haven't yet thrown their lot in with Jesus the opportunity to entrust their lives to Him;
3. give believing young people the opportunity to go deeper and explore issues particularly relevant to their age group.

Please pray for Hugo Valero from Blois (formerly Perspectives finance director, now in secular employment) who will be leading the main meetings about discerning the will of God, and for the organising team, which includes two UK missionaries (Sarah Winterburn and myself) and four French volunteers.

* Take a look at orangeriedebeauregard.com – I highly recommend it!

You can contact Peter at pierre.rachel.calvert@gmail.com



A taste of Tours

FM supporter Jennifer Rowlands reports on her time in the Loire valley



I've been supporting France Mission for some time, and praying for the church to grow in France, so in **autumn 2023** I was thrilled to be able to combine a holiday in Tours in the lovely Loire valley, with time getting to know a group of Christians there.

"Meeting everyone from Tours church and elsewhere was an inspiration and real blessing."

Paul Cooke kindly put me in contact with **Sarah & Jack Winterburn** who are ECM missionaries at the Perspectives church in Tours. I had the privilege of "shadowing" Sarah in her usual work. A big thank you to her for all her planning for my visit and for her welcome. Meeting everyone from Tours church and elsewhere was an inspiration and real blessing.



Sarah balancing the books at the community shop



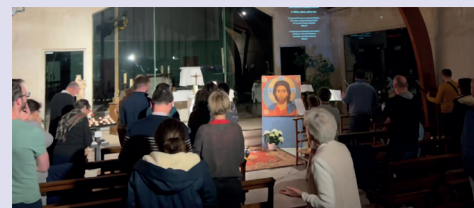
Sarah leading worship, with Marc Van Eijden on the left

We went to a meeting of leaders from many **different churches** busy organising events and another time of praise in a Catholic church open to all.

On the Sundays I went along to the church services in Tours and helped with different **children's groups**. All ages learn about the same Bible stories in their own way, so I shared in learning about the Fall, and then how God rescued people through Noah. Sarah leads worship with other musicians and Jack shares in the preaching.

I was so encouraged by Tours church because alongside more mature Christians to give support and guidance, there are new people coming to church and to faith. There was an atmosphere of **expectation and excitement** as people discover the love and power of Christ in their lives.

Both Sarah and Jack also volunteer at a nearby **community centre**. I welcomed and chatted to people with Sarah, and with Jack leafletted the surrounding houses to advertise a forthcoming jumble sale! The



A worship gathering open to all

centre has two charity shops, one selling clothing and the other bric-a-brac and books, and is also the base for the local food bank which is a lifeline for many families in the area.

We also visited the little town of **Loches** south-east of Tours. There a very small group of Christians have a lovely shop-front church. They are faithful and full of life, but desperately in need of help and leadership to be able to grow the church. Please join



Marie-Thérèse, vice-president of the community centre, Maison de la Solidarité

me in prayer for this fellowship so that they can be encouraged and also for the Tours church to grow in numbers and in maturity in Jesus.

Paul Cooke adds... Three months after Jennifer returned from France, I received the following news from Naomi Berthonneau at the Perspectives church in Loches:



When I gave the last update in June, I said many questions remained unanswered but that we serve an amazing God who takes care of His people. This has certainly been true for us the past few months. I'm happy to report that things are going well in Loches. **Marc Van Eijden** (who pastors the Perspectives church in Tours) has settled into his role, and we're blessed to have him 3 out of 4 Sundays. This has brought a much-needed stability and reassurance to the members. Marc's experience and wisdom have proved invaluable and have helped clarify many questions leading to renewed enthusiasm. Some **new people** have started attending and the **Youth Alpha course** that we started last year has opened up amazing conversations with teenagers. Financially, God has provided wonderfully. We've gone from barely having enough money to pay the rent to being able to budget for projects in 2024. **How amazing is that!** So, my heart is filled with gratitude, excited to see what God will do in and around Loches, where He will lead us in 2024 and how we can partner with Him to make disciples.

You can contact Jennifer at jennrowlands@gmx.com and Naomi at naomiberthonneau@gmail.com



An inaugural mission week in Nancy for iConnect France



GBU staff worker Licia Français is encouraged by this initiative



(Most of) the Nancy team. Next to Licia is Lauricia (2nd from right), one of the GBU Relay Workers being supported by FM this year



Internationals at one of the evening activities

Did you know that France is in the top five countries for welcoming exchange students? According to Campus France, there were about **400,000 internationals** studying in France in 2022. Like Christian Unions in the UK, French GBUs¹ want to share the gospel with university students – including internationals!

The GBU's international student ministry "iConnect" started in 2016 in Paris with an IFES (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students) staff worker and some volunteers. It grew and evolved even when Covid hit hard a few years later. After the pandemic, the staff worker became

national coordinator, and the goal was to launch small teams in other French cities too. In Lyon, we started some events in 2021 and have had a team since, with different volunteers (students or graduates) every year.

27th January-2nd February was an **historic moment** as we had our first ever iConnect mission week! It took place in Nancy, where the newest iConnect team was created a year ago. We saw the opportunity to encourage and train the team while also partnering with the city's churches. It was a big adventure, but God deeply blessed this time. The team included 5 GBU staff workers or trainees, 5 students, 1 Friends International apprentice who came all the way from Glasgow, and 1 staff worker from another student ministry in Lille (there were 7 nationalities among us!).

After a time of teambuilding and city exploration, we went on the campus with flyers and ice-breaker questions at lunch times, talked with students and invited them to the iCafé events in the evening (music & dance night, Chandeleur night...). **We praise the Lord** for the students who came and opened His word for the first time, for the good conversations, and the joy of sharing His presence and love with others. Looking ahead, **please pray** for the iConnect team starting in Rennes!

¹Groupes Bibliques Universitaires: the equivalent of UCCF (uccf.org.uk) in the UK

You can contact Licia at licia.francais@gmail.com or find out more at gbu.fr/



Growing a church in Paris

Pastoral couple Jonathan & Rachel Vaughan celebrate a process of development



Perspectives' goal is not only to plant new churches, but to **help those churches grow** into stable, well-established congregations that will one day be able themselves to plant new churches. This process of development can be seen in different ways in the Cardinet church: numerical growth, leadership, and structure.

Our church building was very full for the Christmas service, with many invited guests. We'd like to be able to welcome more

people to our services and are at times **reaching the limits** of our current premises. One idea is to rent a larger space for special services, as an intermediate step towards finding a

new meeting place. Property prices in our area of Paris are sky-high, making buying somewhere bigger a daunting prospect. **Please pray** for God's wisdom, and that He would continue to bring new people to our church.

For the last 18 months, the *équipe pastorale* (elders' team) has been down to two people. We were therefore looking to identify and train a new elder, to ensure healthy spiritual leadership for the years to come. In January



Younger teen group sharing a meal of raclette



Fiona was baptised in December

we invited Mika Andrianarijaona to join the team. Mika preaches regularly, and with his wife Dina already serves on the church council. **Please pray** that God would confirm Mika in this new role and for the elders to serve well together.

At our AGM in March, we set up our church's **association culturelle**. This is a legal declaration to the French authorities of our existence as a local church (a bit like setting up a

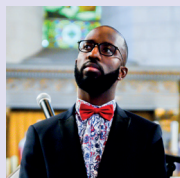
registered charity in the UK). It's a necessary step in the church's development, one that Perspectives has been encouraging us to take and is now possible. Rather than just an administrative formality, we celebrate it as an important milestone in our church's history.

Praise God for these positive signs and **pray** that He would continue to bless and guide us as Cardinet church continues to develop.



Collage of our art exhibition in November

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



A new page for Le Rivage

Elder Xavier Chandler reports on developments in Aix-les-Bains



Aix-les-Bains is famous for at least one thing: easy access to the eastern shores of the Lac du Bourget. Although we love our lake, our desire is that our church, Le Rivage (meaning “shoreline” or “waterfront”), should be an easily accessible space where people can meet, share life, and especially discover God and His Word.

2023 therefore marked something of a turning point for our community as about 20 founding members were able to set up an *association cultuelle*.¹ Our team of elders has also changed and now consists of five people, including Thierry Mirone who first planted the church a decade ago. This team is supported by male and female deacons who serve in various areas of church life: families, music & art, and hospitality.

Our slogan, *N'allons pas à l'église, vivons l'église* (= Let's not go to church, let's live church), recalls our desire to be church wherever we are and whatever we're

“Doors have opened for us very quickly in this area.”

doing. That's why one of our core activities is the time we spend together as “the scattered church” in the **small groups** we have in six different locations: Drumettaz, Trévignin, Aix-les-Bains, Grésy-sur-Aix, La Biolle, and Chindrieux. The last of these is the farthest away from Le Rivage, in an area called Chautagne where there is hardly any evangelical presence. However, doors have opened for us very quickly in

One of the six small groups



The “Novice and the Dragon” show in Aix



Enjoying the church weekend away



The Protestant temple being used by Le Rivage

this area and one of our elders who leads this small group has been able to develop good contacts.

We were also able to celebrate **two baptisms** in 2023: Jonathan H. and Cyril T., both warmly supported by their respective families. As it happens, Cyril completely lost his voice on the day of his baptism, but the Lord used his wife to share a vibrant testimony about His grace in their lives.

We all very much enjoyed gathering for

our church weekend away in the middle of May at a Christian holiday centre in the Alps called Camp des Cimes. With games, downtime, fellowship meals, and a praise evening, we experienced the truth of Psalm 133.1: “How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!”

There's been a busy start to 2024: two of our elders were delighted to welcome their third child at the end of last year. We thank the Lord for all the **children** who are part of our community. As their numbers grow, we're considering how best to organise things so that each children's group can spend quality time in an appropriate space.

This leads me to share with you our **prayer points** for 2024:

- At the end of last year, the president of the Protestant church next to the Bridge Club (where we hold our services) agreed to let us use one of their rooms. Surprisingly, they've also agreed to us renting their church for three “test” services. Might we be able to use these premises on a more permanent basis? Please ask for the Lord's will to be done.
- Pray for our six small groups and for God's work in Chautagne.
- Give thanks for a show called “Novice and the Dragon” that we were able to stage in Aix-les-Bains in February.
- Pray for our church council and ask that everyone might be able to see how to contribute to building others up and sharing the gospel.
- Pray for the next stage of our development as an *église majeure* (mature church).

Thank you for praying – may the Lord bless you!

¹See the previous article for an explanation of this term.

You can contact Xavier at rivage.concept@gmail.com



“Eternal Victory” in southwestern France



Eirwyn Vaughan, FM Area Rep for North Wales, reports on a holiday combining rugby and the gospel

Unfortunately, France didn't win “their World Cup”, but many French Christians proclaimed the greatest victory in a special Rugby World Cup New Testament called *Victoire Éternelle* (henceforth VE). It includes 40 clear testimonies of faith in Christ shared by sporting champions, as well as the Psalms and Proverbs. I decided to buy 50 copies and collect them in Toulouse from a Kiwi called Matt Gwynne.



VE was published by Holistic Sports (holisticsports.fr), whose leader is Joël Thibault. I'd met Joël in 2022 near Rennes, where he helps lead a church called Espérance des Nations (esperance.life). Matt works closely with Joël and is now a chaplain with the rugby league team in



Joël Thibault and his book: *The Champions'* Chaplain



Eirwyn & Gwenda with a contact in Toulouse

Toulouse. Matt delivered VE, and we had wonderful fellowship with him and his South African fiancée whom he married in December 2023.

In **Toulouse** we visited a couple we'd got to know from the Église Baptiste de la Côte Basque. This time we had the added pleasure of meeting their 2-year-old daughter! Oh, the joys of Christian fellowship! They took a good number of VE to distribute in their church near Matabiau station. Before leaving Toulouse for the Gers countryside, we met two very friendly gentlemen on the street (asking for directions is a sure way of getting to know people in the friendly *ville rose*). They both gratefully accepted a VE.



Eirwyn with the Secretary of Auch Rugby Club

So, we got to **Fleurance**, the small town where the Lord placed me for my year abroad in 1975. A church was planted there in 1980 and I've kept in close touch ever since. I was able to speak in the Sunday service about my work in Wales and also about VE. Fleurance is a rugby-mad town!

“It was such a joy to talk with a 17-year-old at the service who loves rugby and loves the Lord.”

Many worshippers wanted VE copies for family members. It was such a joy to talk with a 17-year-old at the service who loves

rugby and loves the Lord. His father is a coach at nearby Lectoure Rugby Club.

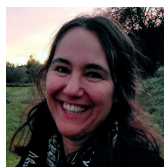
Another highlight was after a lecture in **Auch** on its club's 100-year history. I got talking to the club's secretary, who was very friendly and welcoming, and he willingly accepted a copy of VE for the club and firstly for his reading. His club helped nurture the world class talents of four current members of the French squad: Antoine Dupont, Gerard Alldritt, Anthony Jelonch, and Pierre Bourgarit.

Alldritt, the French captain, hails from the Gers' second largest town, **Condom**. I decided to look up the ADD (Assemblies of God) church there. There was a Friday morning prayer meeting, but I mistimed my arrival. However, as I was about to walk away from the empty church building, I saw a man approaching from a nearby street. He turned out to be the new pastor, recently arrived from Brive! I praised our Lord for His timing. We had good fellowship, and he took a fair number of VE to share among his church congregation.

All in all, it proved to be a **true blessing** for myself and Gwenda: our Airbnb host and *gîte* host in Fleurance also willingly accepted the VE. It wasn't what I'd envisaged way back in 2021, but “His ways are not our ways” as I often discover.

Please pray for Joël Thibault who's appeared a few times on French TV to share the Christian view on many serious issues which have cropped up among professional French footballers. He gets invitations to speak at schools and colleges about his work as a sports chaplain and the importance of Christian principles in the world of sport.

You can contact Eirwyn at tomfychan@gmail.com



A generous spirit?

Rachel Calvert, Chair of A Rocha France, reflects on the challenge of humility

In humility, count others more significant than yourselves. Look to their interests" (Philippians 2:3-4). Assume the best of their motives. Be prompt to forgive as Christ forgave you, ready to overlook perceived slights. On paper, it sounds straight forward. But **how hard** it is to put into practice in the nitty-gritty of daily life!

A ROCHA
FRANCE

Within A Rocha, we often work with local and regional authorities and other environmental charities who do not share our commitment to Christ. But there are still many ways that we can **work together** for the common good, for the flourishing of local communities and of all God's creatures.

Other organisations we partner with are Christians with whom we share a real proximity in terms of theology and church background. We have a shared understanding of mission and of gospel priorities. Others again are from different Christian traditions, with different emphases, different ways of understanding Scripture, and different ways of doing things. Some are perhaps not sure whether we are "real Christians"... and at times, the reverse can also be true! It's not always easy to seek to understand and think the best of one another, whilst remaining clear and uncompromising on gospel essentials.



And **when tensions arise**, it can be complicated to untangle envy and personal ambition from more noble motives.

I often find myself wondering exactly **what Jesus meant** when He sent his disciples out and told them to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16).

In *Romans: Momentous News*, David Cook writes of the **Apostle Paul**: "He is a man of generous spirit. He is not given to parochial interests. If God is at work, Paul prays for and supports the work. What a model he is in ministry in contrast to other examples of professional jealousy and territorial insecurity."

Please pray for us, and for others involved in Christian ministry in France, that God would help us to grow in this area!

You can contact Rachel at rachel.calvert@arocha.org



What is the CNEF?

France Mission's Director Paul Cooke provides an overview

This is the first of three articles to help supporters understand a bit more about the broader picture of evangelicalism in France. We'll start by looking at the CNEF, before moving on to the Réseau FEF and Perspectives in future issues.

Although still a relatively young organisation, the **CNEF** (National Council of French Evangelicals) has its roots in the 16th-century Reformation and the Revival movements that followed.



In June 2001, many French evangelical leaders assembled at the Nogent Bible Institute for a meeting organised by the French Evangelical Alliance (founded in 1846) and the French Evangelical Federation (founded in 1969). Over the next nine years, this **crucial meeting** led to increasing co-operation between various evangelical denominations and organisations such that the CNEF was formally established in June 2010. It now represents over 70% of French evangelicals, with 34 denominations and 179 organisational members.

All CNEF members share the same **three-fold vision**:

- 1. Being – a spiritual body:** various evangelical denominations and organisations come together in the CNEF to express and deepen the unity they have in Christ.
- 2. Doing – an institutional force:** united, CNEF members can express their values within French society and represent Evangelical Protestantism to the authorities.
- 3. Inspiring – a missional dynamic:** together, CNEF members seek to promote

gospel witness in word and deed wherever they can, especially through planting new churches, strengthening existing communities, and participating in world mission.

For organisational ease, CNEF members are assigned to one of **five categories**, referred to as "poles":

- **Pôle œuvres:** for evangelical organisations and training institutions
- **Pôle ADD:** for the Assemblies of God and associated denominations (493 churches)
- **Pôle évangélique de la FPF:** for evangelical churches that also belong to the French Protestant Federation (369 churches)
- **Pôle Pentecôtiste charismatique:** for charismatic & Pentecostal denominations other than the ADD (265 churches)
- **Pôle Réseau FEF:** for classic evangelical denominations (455 churches)

Each of these poles elects members to serve on the CNEF's Representative Committee (16 members) who then elect an Executive Group (5 members). **Rachel Calvert** currently serves on the Representative Committee. FM's main mission partner, Perspectives, belongs to the Pôle Réseau FEF. I'll explain more about them in the next issue. In the meantime, **please pray** for the CNEF as they seek to unify and represent French evangelicals.

You can find out more about the CNEF at lecnef.org



A novel celebration

Paul Cooke introduces John Adamson's latest book

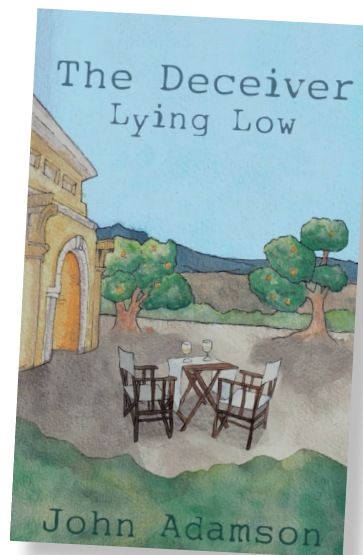
As part of France Mission's 50th anniversary celebrations, Area Rep John Adamson has literally come up

with a novel contribution, a story called *The Deceiver*. John is a Christian author and humourist and has written a mystery tale set largely in Europe which is the perfect read on the plane, boat or beach for the savvy holidaymaker in 2024!



John Adamson

A series of strange arrivals from the UK and France at a Seville hotel leads to a wealthy ex-convict-turned Christian with a mission to deliver, but his plans are disrupted by a police investigation into the unexplained death of a young woman on the fourth floor of the hotel. The man's Andalusian church-planting plans are challenged by the visitors who leave him in no doubt as to the realities of the project. Is the devil at work disrupting his aims? An arrest threatens his security, unsettling him and prompting his French guests to suggest an alternative. But has it all been too much? Will an ongoing romantic interest put a further mouche in the ointment?



Many FM supporters have always enjoyed visiting France and *The Deceiver* reminds the new generation of travellers to discover what God has done, what He is doing now, and where He will lead in the future.

Proceeds from the book, which is published by Mirador, are kindly being dedicated to France Mission. John has a **limited number of copies** available directly from him at the discounted price of £10 plus p&p of £2.30 (UK addresses) on a first-come, first-served basis. The cost of p&p to addresses in other countries is available from John on request. The book is also available from Amazon in Kindle format as well as paperback.

You can contact John at johnadamson@francemission.org



Other news from Paul Cooke

Author invitation

Author John Adamson (see article opposite) is the FM Area Rep for northwest England. He'd be very happy to consider invitations to speak at church events about how he combines his activity as an author with his love for France. You can watch a video interview in which John talks about his writing at bit.ly/Adamson-interview (the focus is on France from 21:45) and you can contact him at johnadamson@francemission.org



Percy children sitting with Gordon & Avril Margery at the first worship service of the France-Mission church in Brest. Jim was raised a Catholic and it was in Lourdes that the Percy family invested in their first church-planting experience in France. After a couple of years back in the States, they returned to plant the Brest church in 1975, before helping with the France-Mission churches in Vannes and Dinan in the 1990s. They returned to live in the USA in 2000 but remained regular visitors to France for outreach campaigns and helped establish an American support network for an evangelistic movement called France pour Christ. Many French Christians will be giving thanks for a life well lived in the Lord's service. You can read fuller tributes to Jim at eglises-perspectives.org/actualites/.



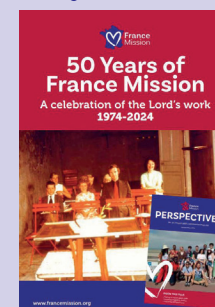
Jim Percy

Jim went to be with the Lord on 13th February. He was American but his wife, Delia, is British and, with their five children, they featured regularly in the earliest versions of this magazine. In fact, the cover of our

50th anniversary publication shows the

50th anniversary France Day and booklets

There are still some spaces available. If you'd like to book for the 50th anniversary France Day on 27th April 2024 at Bishop's Stortford Baptist Church in Hertfordshire. I can also supply spare copies of the anniversary booklet if you can use them. For both things, please 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) 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.

Thank you!



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