

Chapter 15

FRANCE



Although the ministry in France remains an outreach of OAC Great Britain (OAC GB), so much work has been done and continues to be done there that we will treat it as a separate country. But first, we need to look at a little French history.

France, for all intents and purposes, was the first country in Europe to abandon Christianity. It became a strong belief among the peasant class that the absolute monarchy, united with the Catholic Church clergy, lived lives of luxury while leaving the ordinary people destitute. The French Revolution (1789-92) resulted in the overthrow of the monarchy and the Church's power. France then became a secular country under Napoleon and those who followed him. The French, in effect, had experienced enough of the Catholic Church, which represented Christianity in their country. France became a secular society, which explains why its people have historically been hard to reach for Christ. The trend toward secularism spread to the rest of Europe. The good news is that in recent years, there have been biblically sound churches slowly planted all over France. Now, we come to OAC's involvement in the country.



SUSAN AND MARK HOWE

OAC has worked in France since the 1960s, but it was not until February 1989 that a British couple, Mark and Susan Howe, moved there to live and seek to establish an OAC ministry in that part of Europe. They began by making connections with French churches and other missionary organizations. From the start, the aim was not just to evangelize but to train French churches and individuals to evangelize. The original OAC team have now become involved in other forms of ministry. Richard and Margaret Kemp did evangelism with the Howes from 1993 to 1999. Since then, they have actively engaged in evangelistic youth work with a church in Montpellier. In 1999, Mark and Susan were joined by Peter Kent,

who had been doing ministry in France since 1992. Peter continues to live and minister in Paris to the present day. He is engaged in training churches across the country and often conducts open-air evangelism on the streets of Paris. In 1992, Matt and Sylvie Glock also ministered with the team in France and were joined in 1997 by Gilles Vann, who continues to conduct street evangelism with Peter Kent. Matt and Sylvie moved to the USA in 1999. They have since returned to Europe and continue evangelistic



PETER KENT

ministry with Christian Missions in Many Lands (CMML). Under the Howes' leadership, church teams were invited to France, such as during the World Cup and Bastille Day celebrations. Frank Baldus (now our Los Angeles director) was introduced to OAC by taking part with his church in one of these outreaches in 1998. His church later asked him to coordinate open-air outreaches for the young adults group, which connected him with the OAC Los Angeles branch. Many of the people they reached out to knew nothing about God. Peter Kent talks about a Chinese man he met. When asked, "Do you know Jesus?" the man replied, "No, does he live in the area?"

In 2014, Peter and Alison Kennelly from OAC GB responded to a call from the Lord to commence a five-year OAC ministry in France. After nine months of language learning in Paris, they moved to Bordeaux to work. Peter has an interesting assessment of ministry in Europe: "...things are very dark spiritually in Western Europe. This is clear in the UK, France, Germany, and the Scandinavian countries... We have had the gospel almost from the start, and now we have become disenchanted with it, along with faith, church, and 'religion.' Our culture is built on the Bible and the Christian faith, but our lives are not."



PETER KENNELLY

Peter and Alison were engaged in a variety of ministry activities in France before returning to the UK in 2019, which included street outreaches, training, and encouraging individual French Christians to live a lifestyle of evangelism. They also visited other smaller local towns regularly in order to evangelize in places where little work for the Kingdom had been done.



PETER KENNELLY SHARING THE GOOD NEWS IN BORDEAUX

In 2022, Marie Lamore was appointed to OAC Great Britain. She and her husband, Alexander, along with their two boys, live in France. Marie comes to OAC with much experience having been in ministry for more than ten years and taken part in the Festival Mission outreaches in Avignon ten times! At the hotel where the team has stayed each year, God used Marie to lead the hotel manager to the Lord. Training local churches to do effective open-air ministry is also an important part of their work.

