

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 are going to 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 common people destitute. The French Revolution (1789-92) resulted in the overthrow of the monarchy and the power of the Church. France then became a secular country under Napoleon and those who followed him. The French, in effect, had had enough of the Catholic Church, which represented Christianity in their country. France became a secular society, which explains perhaps why its people have been historically 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 churches slowly planted all over France. Now, we come to OAC 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 to that country to live and seek to establish an OAC ministry in that part of Europe. They set about 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



PETER KENT



PAUL (A FRENCH CHRISTIAN) PREACHING IN AVIGNON

involved in other forms of ministry. Richard and Margaret Kemp did evangelism with the Howes from 1993 to 1999. Since then, they actively engage in evangelistic youth work with a church in Montpelier. In 1999, Mark and Susan were joined by Peter Kent, who continues to live and minister in Paris up to the present day. He is engaged with training churches in different parts of 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 was 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 ministry with Christian Missions in Many Lands (CMML).

Under the Howe's leadership, church teams were invited to France, such as during the World Cup and Bastille Day celebrations. Frank Baldus (now the Los Angeles Area director for OAC) was introduced to OAC by taking part with his church in one of these outreaches in 1998. He was asked by his church later to co-ordinate open-air outreaches for the young adults group in his church, which connected him to 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?" 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. After nine months of language learning in Paris, they moved to Bordeaux to



PETER KENNELLY

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 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