

Go to Europe!

So went the prophetic word in 1999, available in full on the website. Since that time we have reminded ourselves that its outworking is not a matter for intense planning, but one in which we must allow God to form relationships, as he sees fit and in his timing.

We asked Steve Thomas to give us an update from one nation where God is clearly forming new relationships between leaders and churches, and the Salt and Light family: France.

What is happening there, and in this and other nations how can we form a 'building strategy' whilst seeking to be relational and Spirit-led?

Relational development

In the last few years we have begun to see a number of churches developing links with the Salt and Light family.

Bob and Muriel Whitchurch went in 1998 from Exeter to plant a church in **Troyes**, having already developed friendships with a number of people in various parts of France. One of these friends was Jean Pillonel, who for a number of years had been the director of the Jeunesse en Mission (YWAM) base about an hour's drive north of Troyes.

Jean and his wife Agnes had been involved in planting churches in **Sezanne** and **La Ferté Gaucher**, and also have encouraged another church plant in **La Ferté sous Jouarre**. A couple of years ago, Jean and Agnes moved to **Marseille**, to plant a church there, which they see as being an apostolic launch point for Southern France and North Africa.

In addition to these churches, in 1997-8 Mark Thomas spent a year as an English assistant in a school in **Montargis**, which led to us forging links with the Evangelical church, which still looks to us apostolically. A couple of years ago, Ally Kay moved from Kent to **Calais** to

become a co-worker alongside David Lacour, pastor of a lively Assemblies of God church.

Our euro.net events in France have been bringing together members of these churches which are clearly connected with us, and people from other "interested" churches. There is a deep desire in France for relational connection between leaders, and also a hunger for apostolic church vision. French Christians have been overwhelmingly blessed and encouraged by the presence of people from our British churches who pray for France, and have a heart to see God's blessing increase in the nation (and of course who love French cheese and wine and other gastronomic delights!).

Having been catalysts for fellowship between these churches and leaders, we have encouraged them to relate together as much as possible, and have also encouraged Jean Pillonel to gather a "fledgling" apostolic team together to give the grouping some leadership. It is still early days for them, but we believe that God is building a family of churches and leaders in France, to extend his Kingdom there, and we want to assist this as much as possible. There are occasional leaders days, either in the north or in the south of France, and these

Get rid of Ishmael!

That was the prophetic challenge Steve Thomas threw out to a group of twenty five or so French church leaders during a day conference at **La Ferté Gaucher, near Paris**.

Steve underlined the importance of working as a team – based on friendship, trust, and good communication – to see healthy churches grow. Fellowship over the lunch table was particularly good (this is the part of the day that French churches are especially good at). During the afternoon Steve challenged us to "get rid of Ishmael" – in other words to be radical in our churches to throw out what was merely human and religious, even if cherished, in order to be truly "children of the promise".

These leaders' days are very important in the development of the 'family spirit' in the French churches, and also in giving practical understanding of how to get 'from here to there' in church life. More planned!

Bob Whitchurch, Troyes

Is there a strategy?

Our apostolic strategy is:

- ▶ To keep encouraging and helping Jean in the building of a 'national' apostolic team
- ▶ To keep encouraging leaders through fellowship and envisioning at leaders days
- ▶ To build a sense of family identity through continuing the summer events
- ▶ To encourage and strengthen local churches by regular visits of fivefold ministries and teams
- ▶ To encourage Christians from churches in the UK to keep praying for France, to keep strengthening events in France by our presence, and to send teams regularly
- ▶ To provoke young people to learn to speak French fluently, and to consider going to work alongside French churches to help and strengthen them, and maybe also to plant churches themselves

Rather like the apostle Paul, our endeavours are a mixture of the leading of the Spirit in the lives of churches and leaders, and some measure of intentionality and planning!



have been a huge encouragement and blessing.

In addition, we now have good links with churches in French-speaking Switzerland, and they have good relationships with Jean and

Agnes. This is all very strengthening indeed. By and large, French churches have been quite small, but the Swiss churches have been stronger.

Steve Thomas