



Alongside
MINISTRIES
INTERNATIONAL



Voices

OF PRAISE & PRAYER

Falling in love with France... Romance to Commitment

Volume 13, December 2009

By Cheryl Cloyd

In the fifth grade, I fell in love.

I signed up for a French class. I learned the numbers, the days of the week and months of the year—and, also, the words to “Angels We Have Heard on High,” which we sang at a Christmas assembly.

That introduction to the French language was all it took. I was hooked. French became my language of choice in school. I spent my graduation money on a trip to France, and love of the language and culture became a love of the place and people.

Attending college, I wondered if God was calling me to France and how I could work things out to get back there.

At a missions conference seminar on Europe I asked a professor about France. He shrugged and said, “There’s nothing happening in the church there. I wouldn’t advise you to serve in France.”

“Why would you go to Europe, when the harvest is ripe in Latin America?” asked a friend.

The bleak picture made me eager to see for myself.

In 1993, I arrived in France with Alongside Ministries. Sitting back in my train seat, the countryside rolling by, I thought, “...this is like coming home.”

That feeling has never left.

Even in true love, a honeymoon doesn’t last forever. Things that I love about the French people and culture—long discussions at the table, critical ways of thinking, finding value in history—can be aggravations as we work in the church.

Why spend time and money on old buildings and organs? Why criticize the pastor rather than jumping in to help him?



James and I are committed to France. We are here because God loves the people of France and called us



James and Cheryl Cloyd

here, whether or not we see fruit from this work.

This last autumn, the French Protestant Federation held a national festival in Strasbourg. More than 15,000 people came to celebrate faith in Christ. There is fresh interest in Bible study within Catholic communities. And through charismatic renewal, the Holy Spirit is bringing new life into a number of historic churches such as St. Nicolas Church in Strasbourg.

James’ ordination as a Lutheran minister symbolized the depth and longevity of our commitment to the historic Protestant church in France.

We struggle daily to live out our commitment alongside people of the two parishes which we serve in le Ban de la Roche—a rural, mountainous region west of Strasbourg.

People here have always been poor and isolated compared to much of Alsace. Yet a local museum is dedicated to a famous pastor, Jean-Frédéric Oberlin (1767-1826), who opened this region to the rest of the world through education and social reform. We see this history as proof that God is here. And in hope, we build on His work.

We seek to show people that God has not forgotten them, that they are important to Him. They need to know that He has the power to raise the dead. Here, I feel a little like Ezekiel must have as God showed him a valley of dry, disconnected, dusty old bones (Ezekiel 37). “Son of man,” God asked, “can these bones live?”

Can emptying churches be filled with people of all ages praising God? We believe it is not only possible, but desired by God and already beginning.

For further information on the gathering of Protestants, see www.protestantsenfete2009.org.

Alongside Roubaix, France

By Margie Gilchrist

Challenges facing the church in Roubaix, France were evident to 15 young adults and leaders who participated in a short-term mission there this summer.

They went to support the leadership of a blended church community representing a traditional French church and North African believers who have come to Christ out of Islam.

Ministering alongside partner Ali Arhab was a rare privilege that provided an opportunity to reach out to a mostly Muslim community around the church.

Karly Fogelsonger, a senior at Hope College in Michigan, shares one story of her experience:

"The last afternoon our team spent in Roubaix, three of us wandered through a park near the church and struck up a conversation with a cluster of men gathered by a bench. Though we were strangers, the men spoke openly, sharing struggles with depression, jail time, drug abuse and unemployment. The men were self-proclaimed Muslims, but as we parted, they accepted every Bible that we offered. In spite of—and through—pain, brokenness and resistance, Christ's healing love is moving and working in Roubaix!"



Team Roubaix



By Ian Rutter

We're privileged to share our conversation with Dr. David Bjork, instructor at AD 2006 and 2008. He and his wife

Diane have a deep love for France, having lived there thirty years.

How did you end up serving in France?

We first heard God's call to missionary service as teenagers, on a missions trip to Haiti. Feeling called to that country, we went to France to learn the language before returning to Haiti.

At that time, we didn't consider France a viable mission field. Our sending organization had no European outreach. But as we built relationships with the French people, God gave us a deep love for them and their country.

Could you explain how your thinking evolved as you adapted to life in France?

I came to France with a naïve, arrogant idea that I carried the most genuine expression of Spirit-filled Christianity that the French could encounter. I didn't think that I needed significant relationship with other Christian churches there.

Early in our ministry a pastor said to us: "Most missionaries are ineffective in France because they come not to serve existing churches, but to do their own thing". It took us years to learn to

honor one's own Christian tradition while hallowing that of others.

What conclusions have you drawn?

First, mission in France must be marked by "cruciformity"—a kenosis or "self-emptying" that leaves the missionary open to change and correction. The missionary learns to live in the Scriptures, the Christian past and the modern world all at once.

Second, the church must combat individualism—a fruit of the Enlightenment worldview which promotes the belief that the self is autonomous, inalienably "free." Most French are unchurched. Even when willing to say "yes" to Jesus Christ, they are often reluctant to embrace church.

Third, the church's evangelistic mission is a lay enterprise. Nonbelievers are attracted to the Christian life, converted and nurtured through personal relationships with lay men and women who have been equipped, empowered and mobilized in the church's evangelistic mission.



Diane and Dr. David Bjork

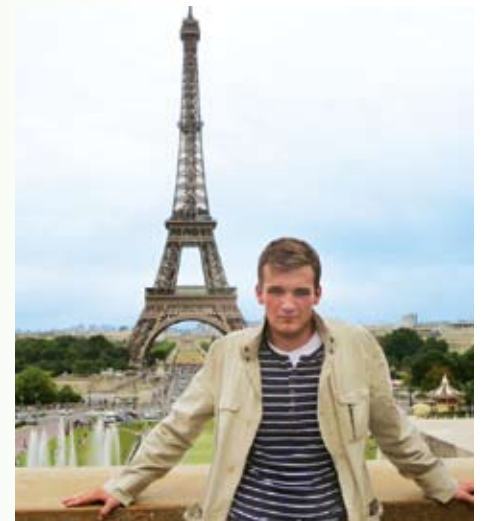
Our entire interview with David can be found on our website at: www.alongside.org

New Alongsider, Richard Peters

Richard Peters, from Vancouver, British Columbia, has been interested in France for most of his life. French heritage, combined with the excitement he felt whenever he would hear of French people coming to Christ, led him to pursue the possibility that God was calling him to serve there.

Richard is now in training for ministry in France. He participated in the Roubaix Project this past summer and is enrolled at the Torchbearer Bible School in Albania, deepening his understanding of Scripture and cross-cultural ministry.

Pray for Richard as his preparations continue and his placement is determined.



Richard Peters





Matt & Lea Edminster

Viimsi, Estonia

We seldom get to minister together because our obligations as Associate Pastor and primary school teacher fall in different parts of the day and week. Childcare also figures prominently in our scheduling... However, we have been able to accompany couples in a home-based marriage mentoring program and have introduced this method of premarital counseling Union-wide.

Doni & Gail Lilo

Ersekë, Albania

Tag-team childcare continues, as do teaching, translating, lesson planning and study. The Fuller MAGL program is stimulating—just what Doni needs to engage heart and mind in theological matters pertaining to personal life and ministry. We were involved in camp for four weeks, Doni as Junior High coordinator and Gail as grade school speaker.



Doni, Gail and Kori Lilo

Amanda McLamb

France

A new school year has begun! Part of my job is to help create “Wednesday World”—a performing arts club for eight to ten-year-old kids. Our theme for the months of September and October was,

“Love, Know, Serve, Go.” We learned about Christian heroes whose lives teach us about serving God. We prepared a drama and music to perform in French at a local retirement home.



Amanda with friends in Geneva



Andrew & Amy Funke

Aberdeen, Scotland

After four years in Scotland, we believe we have accomplished our goal in coming to Stockethill and are in the process of exiting gracefully. We hope to return home in March 2010. Our tentative plan is for seminary studies to pursue a degree in missions and intercultural studies. Andrew will serve Alongside part-time as the East Coast Ministry Associate, focused on recruitment and church relations.

Ian & Teri Rutter

Ségny, France

We have requests from top leaders in historic Reformed churches for parish workers. At the moment, we have no candidates to offer them. I am convinced that wisely chosen cross-cultural partnerships are being used by God to open doors and multiply the impact of the church in Europe.

James & Cheryl Cloyd

Waldersbach, France

James’ ordination on October 18th was a grand occasion. The celebration continued as he was installed as pastor of Waldersbach and Fouday a week later. Meanwhile, Cheryl launched both a children’s ministry and an adult Bible study.

We are turning our attention to the creation of a youth group—probably after Christmas—also an urgent need.

Mark & Ruthie Stoscher

Ersekë, Albania

We had our biggest summer in terms of numbers. Total attendance at camps and conferences was near 1200. We had a very good staff and many children and youth came to Christ. Next year, we hope to add two camps for blind children. Our Bible School has eleven students—a diverse group from six nations.

Micah Young

Berlin, Germany

In Berlin I am both a Citymissionary (a title that Citymission gives to pastors) and an Intern with Berliner Stadtmission Blankenburg—a local church with a congregation that is open, grateful and extremely supportive as I work to finish my studies. We are working on extending my current contract through the end of this school year. Please pray with me for discernment as to whether I am called here for the long term.

Come over and help us!

Alongside depends upon the gifts of faithful friends. Please consider a special year-end gift to provide support and care for our Alongsiders and their ministries in Europe.

Your tax-deductible contributions can be made to:

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I Chron. 29:14*



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Update

Alongside Discovery 2010

July 17-August 8, 2010

What: An intensive three week cross cultural learning and ministry opportunity in Europe!

Where: Select from two projects which will occur simultaneously in Estonia and France:

Estonia Highlights: Travel and study of the church and missions in Estonia, followed by a week-long effort to reach out to the Russian speaking population of North Eastern Estonia. Practical ministry will include projects centered around evangelism, service and compassion.

France Highlights: Live and work in the parish where Jean Frédéric Oberlin was pastor in the 18th and 19th centuries. Study the history and culture of this region as well as plan and lead a VBS in cooperation with the Lutheran church.

Germany Highlights: Teams will come together the third week for an International Conference in Berlin. This week will include sharing of experiences and Bible study in small groups, discovery of the ministry work in Berlin and celebration of Christ in worship.

Who can apply: Any young adult over the age of 18 having competence in at least one of the base languages: English, French, or Estonian.

Cost: Approx \$1600, plus round-trip airfare from point of departure to point of entry in Europe (Frankfurt, Germany, or Tallinn, Estonia). Round-trip travel to Berlin is included in the cost.

To request an application, please email: recruiting@alongside.org.