



Updates and Horizons

June 2023



St Paul's
D O R K I N G



Extracts from Val Praud's diary about her recent visit to Mission Partner Centre de la Réconciliation in Lille.

One cold winter some members of the church in Lille noticed a few youngsters sleeping rough in a local square and felt they couldn't just leave them there so invited about 6 to come into the church to sleep on the floor. Somehow word got round and there were youngsters knocking at the door. They just kept coming, they ended up with 40.

Some of the Catholic Churches heard about this and wanted some refugees in their churches too! Then families began to offer to host them for two weeks at a time. Tricky to co-ordinate. Christian realised that you can't just meet the immediate needs of these youngsters by giving them somewhere to sleep at night and there was a need to equip them to fit in to the community in France. A local mission organisation had a farm type building with outhouses and that has been developed as a hostel.

The link with the church in Lille was established in 2017 by Karen Wheatley and was chosen as a world church partner because it worked with refugees and was relatively close to Dorking for us to go and help.

Why did I go - Since Karen has moved away from the World church team, I have agreed to translate any communications from Lille, so I attended a WCT meeting at the end of 2022 with a suggestion that maybe a group could go and help in Lille. It soon transpired that I had no clue of what they really did and how we could really help, so that maybe a preliminary visit was required. Annabel offered to come too.

Saturday 27 May Unfortunately, on the day of our travel, Annabel was unwell, so wasn't able to come with me. Otherwise, all ran smoothly on my journey, and when I arrived at Lille, Pastor Christian and his wife Christine picked me up from the station, and took me to my Nigerian hosts, George and Onmalade who made me welcome.

Sunday 28 May - It was Pentecost Sunday and Christian's sermon was about half an hour on the Holy Spirit living in us. The band led worship for an hour with the words projected on the walls. I was asked to introduce myself and said I was visiting from St Paul's and looking for ways St Paul's could help them. The church family were very warm and welcoming and I chatted with quite a few of them.

It was the state organised "Greet your neighbour's day" (Fete des Voisins) so neighbours of the church had been invited to a shared lunch. In France, religious buildings are restricted to solely religious and not social use. Only a few of the church's neighbours came but it was great for the church to be able to share a lunch together despite this official French edict.

Monday 29 May - After another restful night, I walked round the neighbourhood then sat in the garden and read and replied to messages - I was feeling really supported by friends from St Paul's. Then I spent the afternoon with a member of the church, Benedicte. She was French and an English teacher, keen to improve her English. She bought me a metro ticket and we headed off, starting at the Musée de l'Hospice Comtesse with a lot of historic photos. When asked for requests, I said I was a tourist so wanted ice cream and postcards, which we found!

Tuesday 30 May - Christian picked me up and took me to his house where he and Christine shared several YouTube clips of the work in progress at Wattingies. Christian was an architect before he became a pastor. Lots of groups go out to help them and they've had some scouts recently. Work happens in the school holidays when the young people are able to lend a hand, thus learning building skills, which they enjoy.

Next we went to the Écoles Sans Frontières, which is the school for the young refugees who are awaiting acceptance into official French education and interrupted some French classes. They have 30 volunteer teachers both retired and young trainees. We met a guy who was an IT teacher... most refugees have never touched a computer. They leave with a memory stick holding their CV and their personal statement!

Next stop Wattingies, an old farmhouse in a village south of Lille. Donated by an organisation that is now defunct, they are converting the cellar to be a place to store food, and the loft to be a flat for a future caretaker/matron.



The Maison d'Esther, as it's called truly is a work in progress! [Maison Esther work in progress](#)

Next stop was the boutique, a charity shop that provides cheap clothes for the poor as well as income for the church, plus a mezzanine with chairs and tables where they welcome the refugees, assess their needs and help with paperwork. There is also an area where mothers and children can shelter overnight. They have a cellar full of stock for the shop.

I asked Christian about how we, St Paul's, can help - Firstly he sent a huge thank you for consistent prayer and financial support. When Saint Paul's started funding them, they were apply for a status that meant young people could do their 10 months National service with them. It's difficult in France where the government is against organisations that help refugees. Lille city council would prefer that the young refugees were left without any help, so word would spread, and the influx of young refugees would cease. Christian sees drug and alcohol problems with that option.



He said it would be great if a small team came from St Paul's to Maison Esther at Waittingies to help with a DIY project. In the summer holidays, there should be some apartments normally rented by students, for volunteers to lodge in.

Wednesday 31 May -Christian collected me, and delivered me to the Eurostar departure gate. All went well with my journey although there was a train strike in UK. I just caught my connection by the skin of my teeth, so God was certainly looking out for me.

3.What did I learn -

The information network between charities is growing - In Paris, it is suggested to the refugees that in Lille they'll get a friendlier approach. Various charities in Lille know about each other. Apparently Christian has been very clever keeping the state out of his affairs.

4.How can we help? - Our giving and prayers are much appreciated, as was my visit. Maybe that's enough.

However, if there is enough interest, a few St Paul's people could help on a DIY project at Wattignies. In the summer holidays, there might be accommodation in flats let to students.

We are hoping there will be future opportunities for members of the church family to spend time in Lille, perhaps helping with the refurbishment of Maison d' Esther, or assisting in an other way with Christian's work with young refugees. What a way to practice your French. Contact worldchurch@stpaulsdorking.org.uk if you are interested.





Visit from Oasis India May 2023

We were very honoured and privileged to have Vishwas and Jessica visit us from Oasis India for the weekend of 20th and 21st May.

Two of the three homegroups who support their work in India managed to have time with them one very kindly inviting them to supper on Saturday evening, and another all managed to come to the afternoon tea. Unfortunately, the third group were not available so hopefully we will have another opportunity for them. I also really enjoyed hosting them in my house during their stay.

For those that missed them they brought with them a video which can still be seen if you follow this link [Oasis India](#).

They both attended and were introduced at the 09.00 and 10.30 services although there wasn't time to hear from them. After lunch with the team that went to India in 2020, they spoke at both the afternoon tea and at The 6.

As you may have already heard Oasis India in Mumbai work with those trafficked into the red-light areas of the city. Jessica told a different story at each of these events. It was quite shocking and sad how each of these girls ended up in Mumbai, sometimes being trafficked multiple times. However, Oasis provides an oasis and support in what is a very hard life. When these girls are able to leave this Oasis, they prepare them to live independently, providing legal advice on getting their status papers, education and training them in health, finance, food preparation and a trade.

If you would like to donate, then please follow this link [St Pauls Dorking : giving](#) including reason for the donation - "Oasis India".

Oasis' work is vital for all those trafficked together with their children, and with funding getting harder to access, any donation you can make will make a huge difference.

Please also let us know if you would be interested in going to India to visit Oasis and their projects in the future.

Sue Swain-Fossey



New Hope Children's Centre in Kenya.

New Hope is one of St Paul's Mission Partners and has been visited by members of the church family. It is one of the children's charities

supported by Hand in Hand, based in Chelmsford, and Sue Smith, their CEO/Manager, sent us the following:

Oakridge Primary has been run by the Children's Centre for some years. Their motto 'Together we create a loving community of purposeful learning that focuses on the whole child; body, mind and spirit' must also apply to the newly established Oakridge Secondary School Section. This is looking to give the secondary students at New Hope



Children's Centre the same opportunity of quality education as the primary section, which is being evidenced by the great exam results being achieved by the students. By providing smaller class sizes and focused teaching from experienced teachers, the hope is that the advantage gained through the primary will not be lost once the students reach secondary stage. There is a lot of confusion within Kenya currently around a change in



curriculum and approach. Though the ambitions are great, the practicalities of working through the changes are challenging and meanwhile students at this stage are the ones that may miss out amongst all the confusion within the government schools. (Over £10,000 of UK support sent to New Hope this year is going towards the teachers' salaries).



Also encouraging is the trust being displayed by others in New Hope. With New Hope's strong links into the community, being able to identify real needs amongst the most vulnerable, New Hope have been given the privilege of distributing food donations from an Indian Community within Nairobi. During the February visit we witnessed packs of foods delivered to New Hope for onward distribution to those most in need.

A reminder of the reason New Hope exists:

Loving the Unloved in Society -

- The abandoned baby that a mother cannot see any hope of caring for
- The child that has been orphaned
- The grandparent left with the care of orphaned grandchildren and no form of income to sustain them
- The young mother that finds herself pregnant through no choice of her own and has been forced to give up her education to care for a baby
- Children that need temporary support and education whilst their family is unable to cope for a variety of reasons.



For information about any of the above, please contact **St Paul's World Church Team:** Carlton Beasley, Annabel Blanch, Sally Hulbert, Jonathan Papworth and Elizabeth Shaw

worldchurch@stpaulsdorking.org.uk

More information about our Mission Partners: [Dave Bookless A Rocha](#), [Centre de la Réconciliation - Lille](#); [New Hope Children's Centre - Kenya](#); [Jenny and Stuart O](#); [Oasis, Mumbai - India](#); [Open Doors - Syria](#); [Penny and Juan Carlos Marcés - Peru](#)