

Shepherding Trips Report # 4

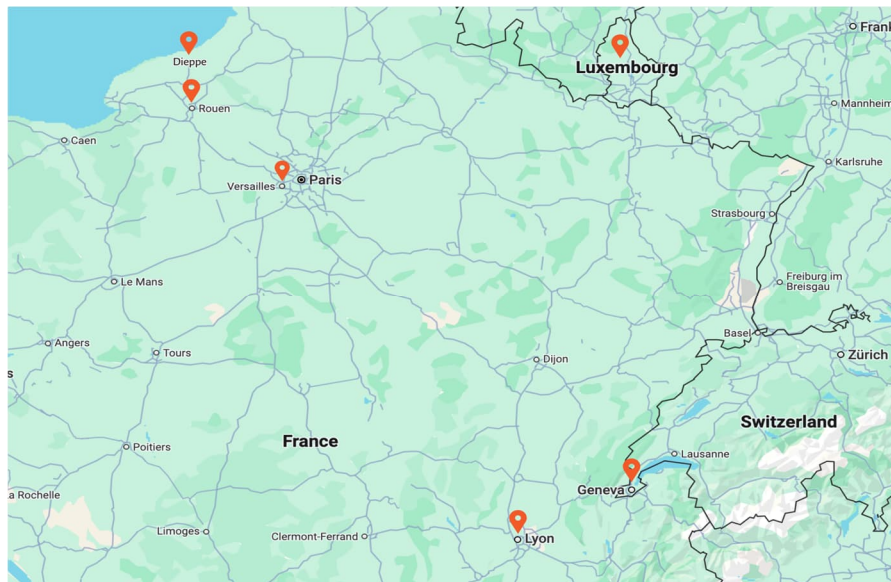
January 2025

As we begin this new year, we look to the Lord to continue what He has begun among the French-speaking people in Europe. His burden to raise up more churches only increases as we pray for “Things that are not seen.”

And yet this report shows what the Lord has been able to do in and through His Body up to today. When a group of French-speaking ones began praying four times a week, four years ago, none of them expected the Lord to use the time of the Summer Olympics in Paris to answer that prayer. Due to the prayer and fellowship with the co-workers in Europe and the saints praying all over the earth, the Lord changed the French people's heart and stirred up a seeking in so many young hearts.

Now at the end of January a number of FTTA and FTTL teams will come to France. In Toulouse and Lille they will be so busy visiting the hungry new ones that they will not have any time for Bible distributions. How marvelous! And in a few other cities they will visit ones who were contacted during the Olympic games and will still have some Bible distributions. This also is wonderful!

Please pray for the trainees’ trip from January 25—February 6.



Prayer Burdens

- Pray that the Lord will send the ones still needed for the full-time team in Paris.
- More saints will respond to the Lord’s call to come to shepherd the seeking ones.
- Pray for all those on the shepherding trips who will be caring for these lambs.

Lille

Your labor in the Lord is not in vain. By your prayer and petition the Lord is progressing in Lille. We still have more than 20 new ones under our continuous shepherding. Many have already finished 3 volumes of the booklets "Basic Elements" and are now reading "The Economy of God."

Our recent new sister wants to get baptized. May the Lord take away any frustration to her being baptized!

Another new one, a local Frenchman (who was baptized as a baby), recently told us that he wants to get baptized, so tomorrow we will go to his house to meet him and his friend and explain the signification of his baptism. This new one is very open; last time when we met him, he prayed and called on the Lord. He said that he felt something different inside of him and he wanted to meet with us again. May the Lord fully gain this new one and his friend (who is also a local Frenchman) and make them remaining fruit.

For the Brussels conference in December, we brought 10 new ones from Lille. They all enjoyed the messages and the blending with the saints. Three of them will attend the Brussels Lord's table meeting with us this weekend. May the Lord bring them forward!

The more we labor here in Lille, the more we realize the importance of the prayer in the Body. Please continue to stand with us by your prayer.

Lille Prayer Burdens:

- Five saints from USA and New Zealand have arrived in Lille to join the shepherding trip (6 weeks and 3 months, respectively). Pray that the Lord will bless their service here.
- One of our regular new sisters finished her studies here and will go back to Brazil this month; we already made the connection with the local saints in Brazil. Pray for a good connection and continuation of her church life.
- We have 15 different home meetings this week. Pray that there will be no cancellations and that nothing will hinder these divine home meetings!

Hallelujah, we are here to proclaim His victory!

Luxembourg

We would like to thank the Lord for all the people we have contacted and the ones who are still here with us. There is a new brother who is really open to the ministry. It is a joy to see him open and still so seeking. He has expressed his desire to be baptized, and his girlfriend would also like to be baptized. If all goes well, they will both be baptized this month (January). We are praying for his girlfriend, who is shy, to be open to more fellowship with the saints. It is wonderful to see how another new brother is persevering. This brother testifies that he now has much more understanding of the Lord and His Word. His wife is open and readily asks questions during our fellowship time in their home. This new one has friends who are also open and are seeking. Let us pray that the Lord will gather them all into Himself, that they will open to the ministry, and that the eyes of their hearts will be opened to see the Lord's recovery today. Also, pray that the new brother's wife will be open for more fellowship with the saints.

We have been encouraged by the opening of a Portuguese-speaking family. This family was contacted during the Bible distribution and has been increasingly open to fellowship. They are

reading “The Basic Elements of the Christian Life” and have been having weekly contact with the saints. Their house is open to the saints, and the husband has been attending meetings with local brothers and sisters. In addition, they have been contacting us with some of their friends and relatives. We believe that they are key to gaining more Portuguese-speaking people. Our prayer is that they will continue to be open and that the church life will be established.

Let us continue to pray for the Lord's advance in Luxembourg.

Geneva

Thank you, Lord, for preparing many open seekers in Geneva and bringing a young couple to emigrate there this year. There are currently 12 saints in Geneva, which includes three families. Two of the saints here also passed through FTTL.

At the present, we have 5 new ones with whom we have regular appointments and another 2 new ones who regularly joining our weekly group meeting. Sixteen others would like us to connect with them regularly.

Our seeing how swiftly the Lord has been moving in Geneva over the past few months has created in the saints a desire for a regular time of prayer. Since mid-October we have been praying once a week with saints from outside Geneva who also are burdened for this city.

May the Lord continue His work in Geneva through much prayer, fellowship, blending, and migrations.

Geneva Prayer Burdens:

- Pray for solid couples/families (at least 2 families) to migrate to Geneva. Pray that these migrating ones will have the capacity to open their homes and join the local saints in cherishing and nourishing the new ones.
- Pray for the saints in Geneva to be coordinated with the serving team in Paris.

Versailles

Versailles is a city significant to the French and known for its Catholic heritage and atmosphere. Over the fifty days of gospel trips in Versailles, saints distributed Bibles and contacted many seeking believers. In our list of ones we contacted, we have reached out to a total of 33 new ones who have attended our Bible study groups and seminars. Among them, 13 have maintained regular contact with us. The gospel fire continued with the heavy burden from these local families and shepherding saints. To better shepherd these new ones (after the gospel trips ended), a family with 3 children in the church in Paris moved to Versailles to coordinate with two existing families here. Starting from a strong burden to care for this need, these three families prayed in one accord weekly with shepherding saints. In November 2024 they began their group meetings every Friday with several seeking new ones in Versailles. At the same time they fellowshipped with the church in Paris to rent a meeting place in Versailles and have the Lord's table meeting twice a month. This is the beginning of the church life in Versailles. May the Lord continue to strengthen the shepherding work in Versailles, gaining the coordination of these local families. May they love one another and bear the one testimony that the Lord is living among them.

Versailles Prayer Burdens:

- Please pray for the local families in Versailles. May the Lord strengthen their coordination.
- To strengthen the testimony, please pray for more couples or families who can migrate to Versailles.

Rouen

From the beginning of the first Olympic trip, the Lord's move in Rouen has been a move of the Body, involving saints from many different countries – United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Australia, Korea, Taiwan, Brazil, and Ecuador, as well as local saints from Dieppe and Paris. On returning home after their gospel trips, overseas saints endeavored to continue to remotely shepherd the contacts they had made by using WhatsApp or Zoom. A month after the last Olympic trip, a couple who had been in Rouen for all five Olympic trips returned from the US to begin the post-Olympic shepherding trips. Since then there has been a steady flow of saints from the United Kingdom, the United States, Korea, Australia, and Taiwan coming for shepherding trips ranging from a weekend to a whole month. Each month we have had some core saints (usually a couple, but sometimes others) staying in a "Shepherd's Tent." These Airbnb apartments have been a base for the work, where visiting saints can stay, and small group meetings have been taking place every Saturday since October 19. Also on Saturdays two groups of saints from around the world that attended the Rouen gospel trips faithfully meet online to pray every week. This surely has been a source of blessing.

This weekend will be our seventh group meeting in Rouen. It has been wonderful blending together, with saints from many different countries and cities laboring together for the Lord's interest in Rouen. This gathering regularly has around six new ones. In addition to the saints staying here, brothers and sisters from Paris, saints meeting in the church life in Dieppe, and other visiting saints (often from the United Kingdom) have been joining this time. The saints started to get into the matters of basic life principles, such as praying, reading the Bible, and praying over the Word. Two weeks ago, they started reading "The Basic Elements of the Christian Life." Over many weeks, the meeting has increased in mutuality, and the new ones have enjoyed staying for up to three or four hours, lingering to fellowship afterward in Farsi, Russian, French, and English in the home with the saints long after the "meeting" has ended. Saints from Dieppe and Paris have supported this time, providing translation as well as food.

Two gospel new ones were baptized at a recent Saturday small group meeting in Rouen. The two teenage children of one of the baptized also prayed to receive salvation that same day. Saints from OL4 and OL5 as well as saints from the church in Dieppe have been regularly shepherding this family and other gospel new ones on a weekly basis. This family has attended the Lord's Day meeting in Dieppe the past four Lord's Days. During the past six months of shepherding from various OL saints, this family has been very open to receive fellowship and ask probing questions about becoming Christians. The mother researched online about the meaning of baptism and expressed a desire to be baptized. When the shepherding sister told her that baptism is a serious matter, she said that the saints are her real family.

Initially, the children asked their mother to wait to be baptized because they were afraid. However, through the saints' prayers their fears were removed, and their mother also spoke to both of them about baptism. The shepherding sister sent the mother some verses on baptism during the week and also asked her to bring extra clothing for baptism on Saturday, if she wanted to be baptized. After the mother spoke to her children, her daughter said, "Mum, the world is coming to an end, just do it [get baptized]". After being baptized, the mother sensed the freedom and joy in the Lord.

That evening, the sister told the newly baptized mother that her children need to pray and receive the Lord. The mother agreed and with the sister spoke to her children about the mystery of human life. The children asked a lot of questions. After their questions were answered, the sister asked the daughter to pray in her native language the prayer in the

“Mystery of Human Life” to receive the Lord. After answering some more questions from the son, he also prayed the same prayer in his native language to receive the Lord.

The mother shared that everything was under God's sovereignty and expressed her thankfulness for the challenging circumstances that led them to find the “church.”

Another gospel contact, a university masters student, who was contacted by US saints, also attended the same Saturday meeting for the first time. After watching the baptism, he decided that he also wanted to be baptized. After the sister filled up the second bathtub upstairs, he was baptized. In the new man there is no race, language, or background; we are simply one flock under our one Shepherd!

The saints are also in contact with an additional 10 - 15 others. We are praying that these ones will: (1) join the Saturday gathering and (2) be open to personal visitation on other days of the week. There is also some feeling to continue more gospel outreach so the Lord can continue to gain locals for His testimony. A couple from the United Kingdom arrived on December 1 to be the “core couple” in the shepherd’s tent for the following two months. Nine saints are scheduled to visit at various times throughout this two-month period to co-labor with this couple. Although the saints have been staying at various Airbnb's throughout Rouen during this time, the feeling is that it would be better to have a more permanent location that does not keep moving around the city. We hope to be able to find such an apartment early in 2025.

A couple from the United States is in the process of moving to Rouen in early 2025. We feel their move will be a strengthening and encouragement and a great help to the labor in Rouen. Furthermore, a sister was recently accepted into a one-year French language program in Rouen. She will start her course in January 2025. In addition to these saints, we feel there is a need for at least two couples or families to move to Rouen to be a base of the Lord’s move and provide consistency to these new ones. As Dieppe is less than an hour away, the saints from there will be very involved in the local church life that the Lord is raising up as His testimony in Rouen.

Sharing from the Shepherding saints:

We met a Christian couple who are the host family for one of the sisters we are shepherding. They were immediately elated to meet us as they are believers dedicated to evangelizing and shepherding young believers. They do not belong to a denomination. They have smuggled Bibles into anti-Christian countries and have read some of Watchman Nee. We feel this was a sovereign arrangement, and they have been open to visits from the saints.

A new sister and her two teenage children were invited to a harvest meeting in Rouen during the gospel trips. I spoke with them in Farsi by using Google Translate. Over the following month my wife and I had several times with them and have become friends. When we left after OL5 we stayed in touch. We went back to Rouen a few weeks later and met several times. They went to Dieppe several times on the Lord's Day to attend meetings. They were very open to receive fellowship, and they began to ask probing questions about becoming Christians.

My wife and I experienced mutual shepherding from the new ones in Rouen. One new one who was left in France by human traffickers instead of being taken on to the UK told us that she now realizes that if she had not been abandoned in France, she probably would not have met the saints from the recovery. Another one told us that we visiting saints are ordinary people, and yet our speaking is very high. He said that for him this is a sign of the end of the age. These little comments were a great encouragement and supply to us and a confirmation that God wants us to continue to play a part in the shepherding of the new ones in Rouen.

During the 3-week shepherding trip, I had the opportunity to again meet a sister from the church in Dieppe and her two children, whom I first met during OL4. Although we do not share a common language, simply eating together, calling on the name of the Lord Jesus, and enjoying hymns was enough to wash and encourage each other. Once again, we experienced that we are both shepherds and sheep to one another. In the new man there is no race, language, or background; we are simply one flock under our one Shepherd!

When I met again a family of political refugees from Iran, I was able to hear more in detail about their difficult situation. Despite their challenges, the sister shared that everything was under God's sovereignty and expressed her thankfulness for the circumstances that led them to find the "church." Her testimony once again deepened my appreciation for the church. Their teenage children also showed their love by always greeting the saints with hugs and asking how they were doing. One of them even took the initiative to reach out to me and my gospel companion, creating an opportunity for us to connect. While I initially thought of them as the subjects of our shepherding, I realized they were also shepherding me with love. Truly, the Body builds itself up in love!

Lyon

After the Lyon OL gospel trip, in a follow-up Friday night meeting we met a Bible recipient's mother and her young half-brother. They were Christians in the denominations. They then came to our Lord's table meeting and told us that she (the mother) was so touched by the Lord's speaking in our meeting that she went back to repent to the Lord for habitually drinking with her partner, the father of her young son. She asked her partner to stop habitually drinking together with her and to repent. At the next Lord's table meeting, they both came. From that time on, they come regularly to the meeting and are no longer drinking and are enjoying meeting with us to have the life supply.

A Colombian couple whom we have contacted from July tabling in Lyon city center regularly comes to our Friday night Bible reading meetings. After the continuous shepherding from our brothers, they also come to the Lord's table meeting. In the year-end meeting, while we were counting the Lord's blessings, this couple, who are seeking political refugee status, came up to testify using the verse Haggai 2:19: "Is there yet seed in the barn? Indeed, even the vine and the fig tree and the pomegranate and the olive tree have not borne fruit; from this day I will bless you." Even though they have not yet seen the result of their demand to change their status, while meeting with us they have the faith that the Lord will bless them.

We also recalled that during the OL gospel trip how the Lord had shepherded the saints in mysterious and amazing ways: A middle-age couple came over to talk to us. From their limited English we learned that they came from Ukraine. They were taking the train to Italy to see relatives. We showed them the Bible, and they showed us their printed literature. And we then realized that this couple were saints in the Lord's recovery from Ukraine. They were so delighted to see saints displaying the Bible outside the train station, and we were overjoyed to meet with them. We talked about our Lyon Ukrainian family, which they have known for a long time. They left an encouraging letter to the young Lyon family and went on their way.

We are very thankful that the church in Lyon is currently caring for 14 who were contacted during the gospel trips.