

May 2023

MISSIONS

FRANCE

A Strategy for
Building Up
Assemblies

South Africa

A Lighthouse
for Ocean View

India

Joys and Challenges
in the Himalayas





THINKING IT THROUGH

BY ALAN PARKS

From Everlasting to Everlasting

My thoughts of late have centered on Moses. He's a fascinating character, isn't he? The story of his birth and early years in Exodus 2 is a study of the magnificence of God's plan. Many years had passed since Joseph's death, and Egypt had crowned new kings who had no knowledge of Joseph saving their land in a time of famine. The number of Hebrews in Egypt had grown so large that Pharaoh now feared them. After all, he knew that if an army attacked Egypt and the Hebrews joined them, they might defeat Egypt. Thus, Pharaoh instructed the midwives to kill all male Hebrew babies.

Thank God the midwives chose to obey God, not Pharaoh! And so, when a beautiful son was born to Amram—a Levite—and Jochebed, his mother hid him for three months. But the day came when Jochebed could no longer hide him, and the thrilling story of her little ark of bulrushes and reeds, waterproofed with bitumen and pitch and set afloat in the Nile River, comes to life. I smile every time I read it.

The baby's sister, Miriam, follows his journey on her side of the river until the little boat floats up to Pharaoh's daughter. The God who can harden hearts can also soften them, and He softens the heart of Pharaoh's daughter at the sight of the beautiful Hebrew boy. Miriam asks if she can fetch a nursing mother from the Hebrews, and soon, Jochebed reunites with her son.

Pharaoh's daughter names him Moses, which means "drawn from the water" in Hebrew and is close to the Egyptian word meaning "son." Moses becomes a glorious picture of the safety in Christ. If we ever wonder if the great Architect of history is intimately involved in everything, this story is thrilling confirmation.

What drew my thoughts to Moses was the only Psalm attributed to him, Psalm 90. In it, Moses expresses truths about God's eternity and humankind's frailty. I've always marveled at his insight in verse 10: "The days of our lives are 70 years; and if by reason of strength they are 80 years. . . ." Consider the advances

in science and medicine since Moses was alive. And yet, according to the National Center for Health Statistics, the average lifespan is 73 years for American men and 79 for American women.

But Moses also addresses the big picture. In verse 1 of his prayer, Moses writes, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations." And he ends verse 2 with "Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." Generation to generation is one way humankind measures time, but God measures it from everlasting to everlasting.

The words *dwelling place* stand out to me. Moses's life of 120 years was divided into three segments: 40 years in Pharaoh's palace, 40 years in his father-in-law's home, and his last 40 years in the desert leading the children of Israel. In none of those 40 years do we read of him having his own home or dwelling place. Yet, with remarkable wisdom, Moses offers truth for all of us: Even if we live in a house that we own, a condo, or an apartment, it's a temporary dwelling at best. Each generation can find its ultimate dwelling place in Him, and believers, ourselves included, belong to the God who dwells from everlasting to everlasting. Through His marvelous grace, we'll spend the everlasting forever with Him.

The great Hall of Fame chapter—Hebrews 11—summarizes Moses's life in verses 23–29. Five times, the writer says, "By faith." His extraordinary life was characterized by faith in God. We live in trying days, as Moses did. This groaning creation is crumbling all around us, and our daily cry is "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20) Things we've taken for granted may be taken from us in the future. Yet we can rely on the same God and on the same truths as Moses: "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations" and "Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." ■

Alan Parks is a commended worker based in Texas.

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Following Directions and Making Plans

A Church-Planting Movement Builds Up Assemblies in France



BY BRAD DICKSON, MATTHEW GLOCK,
& GERRY SEED

"A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps." (Proverbs 16:9) This verse underlines the connection between the choices we make and God's leading.

Over the last 10 years, a church-planting movement has taken root among the Brethren assemblies in France. This is God's doing. He worked through the dreams and plans of the men and women who accepted His call to make disciples and start new gospel works by joining with others.

There are about 200 assemblies in France. Among them, 120 work closely together. Many of the missionaries in France sent out by US and Canadian assemblies have served the assemblies in this network.

In 2013, only three active projects existed among these assemblies. Since then, 26 new projects have started. Among them, five have developed into mature assemblies with recognized elders while two have been disbanded—thus leaving 22 projects in various stages of development. All this is God's doing.

When we look closer, we see that God sovereignly moved the hearts of many believers to take the Gospel to new neighborhoods and cities. Some of the projects resulted from an assembly sending out a team to a nearby town. At other times, a recognized church planter gathered a team and moved to a town that needed a new work. At the heart of each project is a team of disciples joining together to make other disciples in a specific place. The members planned their way, and God directed their steps.



Map: The 22 current church-planting projects. **From top (L-R):** Deux Rives, a church in Toulouse that began as a church-planting project in 2013 but is now a mature assembly, has seen remarkable growth; Believers graduate from the church-planters' training center in Aix-en-Provence; Brad Dickson and Philippe Perrilliat congratulate a graduate, Valérie; The Deux Rives believers enjoy a weekend church retreat, an opportunity for fellowship and spiritual refreshment.

We can observe two initiatives that God was pleased to use to contribute to this church-planting movement. One involved planting a church that would have a regional impact. The other initiative involved forming a church-planting commission that would serve the Brethren assemblies.

A regional strategy for assembly growth

In 2011, Brad and Catherine Dickson in collaboration with Philippe and Marie-Christine Perrilliat (GLO Scotland) began to dream of how to plant a church that would have a regional impact. Two years of reflection, discussion, and prayer led them to lay out a four-pronged plan for France's Provence region and its five million inhabitants: planting a local church, starting a student outreach, strengthening ties between the 22 existing assemblies, and establishing a program to train future church planters. They chose to start in Aix-en-Provence (commonly called Aix), a university city that is also the geographic and historical center of Provence.

Planting a local church

The Dicksons and Perrilliat gathered a team of about eight other people. They understood that planting a church goes faster and better with a reasonably sized team. Some of the team members were temporary interns from Bible schools; others were self-supporting tentmakers, like Priscilla and Aquila. Such a team is already a minichurch. The relationships between its members are a powerful manifestation of what the Gospel produces in people's lives. Together, the church-planting team accented discipleship and Bible training. Now, 10 years later, there is an encouraging assembly of around 60 people, which is a good size in France, and three young men have been named as elders (all of which enabled the Dicksons to move to another project in 2021).

Starting a student outreach

The team also began ministering to the 40,000 students in Aix, which became an important part of the project. Through the help of many French and international believers, the team purchased space just one block from the university campus, and they transformed it into a coffee shop that reaches students.

Working with students has been key to the assembly's growth. It has also contributed to the regional strategy: saved young people from the outlying areas converge in Aix to study, and they return to their home churches as trained disciples.

Strengthening ties between existing assemblies

When local assemblies are too isolated, they miss out on some forms of ministry that a group of churches can better accomplish. One such ministry is training. Although each local assembly must train its own future leaders, there is an added blessing when 20 or 30 eager young couples from different assemblies gather to profit from several qualified teachers over a

weekend. The trainers bring their expertise, which is certainly a benefit, but one of the biggest bonuses is the relationships of mutual help and encouragement that develop among the future leaders.

Establishing a church-planters' training center

The team's goal was not to plant one church but to give momentum to a church-planting movement. They adapted a two-year curriculum that combines classroom training with an on-the-field apprenticeship. The program is now in its third cycle and has produced several new churches as well as helped a few local teams revitalize their struggling assemblies.

The role of the church-planting commission

There is still a dearth of evangelical churches in France. In 2013, the newly formed Council of Evangelical Churches in France (CNEF) brought together representatives from 10 of the major evangelical groups in France. Together, they considered how to best pursue the goal of one evangelical church per every 10,000 people.

The reality of that vision meant multiplying the number of gospel-centered churches in France by roughly three. Five representatives from the Brethren assemblies, including Matthew Glock (in Paris) and Gerry Seed (Nantes), participated in that project, which was spread over three years.

Following the initial CNEF meeting, the group representing the assemblies decided to meet regularly by Skype to pray and reflect on the work of planting new assemblies in France. The challenges were great: the number of new churches had become stagnant over the past few years; the foreign missionary input had dwindled considerably; and the number of full-time French workers, although increasing, was still too inadequate to maintain the developing work. Prayer was our only hope—and our most efficient tool!



The group has continued to meet faithfully every Thursday morning for an hour of prayer and discussion. The composition of the group has changed over the years, but Matthew and Gerry are still involved, along with Philippe Perrilliat (in Aix) and two national full-time workers Naina Andria (Rennes) and Timothée Hégé (Saint André). These meetings have led to numerous initiatives that encourage a renewed vision for planting new assemblies in France.

In one of our early projects, we gathered the leaders of the assemblies in southeastern France and presented a series of three seminars on planting churches and the need for a

missions mindset. As the leaders illustrated the history of their assemblies, it became clear that all our assemblies are rooted in church-planting efforts and that if we are to make progress in spreading the Gospel in France, we must return to that missionary mindset.

Since then, several new works have been launched in the area, and there is a renewed effort to work together for the progress of the Gospel—as seen in the establishment of a local fund that helps newly planted churches.



On a wider scale, the group organizes an annual, three-day seminar for the church planters working with the assemblies. At

the end of January 2023, we brought together 32 church planters and team members from 17 projects. It was a time of spiritual refreshment and stimulation.

The biblical model

Over the years, the church-planting commission has observed time and again the simple truth of Proverbs 16:9: “A man’s heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.” We are amazed by how God leads.

We are seeing in other regions of France the same dynamics present in Aix-en-Provence—that is, a church planted in a central location with a vision to multiply and a desire to strengthen existing churches. This vision is patterned after the apostle Paul’s third missionary journey, where he took up temporary residence in Ephesus and spent three years preaching and teaching the Gospel. The result was “that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” (Acts 19:10)

In the past 10 years, we have seen five projects develop into mature assemblies with recognized elders, and another 22 projects are in various stages of development. God is at work. Although modest in many respects, the assemblies are making an important contribution to the growth of the evangelical church in this secularized country.

Thank you for praying with us for this church-planting movement. May many come to faith in Jesus Christ, and may many new assemblies gather to proclaim the glories of the One who called them out of darkness into His glorious light. ■

Brad Dickson is commended from Fairhaven Bible Chapel in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; Matthew Glock is commended from Plano Bible Chapel in Plano, Texas; and Gerry Seed is commended from Bethany Gospel Chapel in Regina, Saskatchewan.



Opposite page: As part of the church-planting commission, Naina Andria, Matt Glock, Gerry Seed, Philippe Perrilliat, and Timothée Hégé meet every Thursday for prayer and discussion. **This page:** (Left) Thirty-two believers left the 2023 church-planters’ retreat spiritually refreshed and stimulated. (Above, from top and L-R): The Palaiseau Saclay project, in Paris’s southern suburbs, was launched in 2019; Once a team that worked in a church plant in the 1990s and 2000s, Sylvie and Matt Glock (left) now serve in Paris, Dominique Sanchez (center) in Grenoble, and Brad Dickson (right) in Manosque; A believer from the Rennes Nord work is baptized; After participating in the church-planters’ training center, a team launched a project in Salon-de-Provence; The believers in Salon meet in a restaurant, simply rearranging the tables and chairs; This church in Nantes is planting two new churches.

For a look at the church-planting work in Paris, read Matthew Glock’s article from the February 2018 Missions issue at [CMML.us/magazine/archive](https://cmml.us/magazine/archive).

OCEAN VIEW BEGINNINGS

A Lighthouse in the Darkness

BY DAVID CROUDACE

Ocean View, South Africa, is a town of violence, where drugs and drug lords hold sway. There is an average of more than 50 drug-related murders every year. Most nights, one hears gunshots and, these days, often in the daytime as well.

In the late 1960s, only three believers lived in the town. For Christian fellowship, they would travel to the Steenberg assembly, which was about 25 miles away. Ernest de Vries, with a few others from Steenberg, started making weekly visits, holding evangelistic cottage meetings in the homes of unbelievers and open-air services in the township. Not seeing any fruit for several years, they were on the verge of giving up when, early in 1970, a man got saved—the answer to the Steenberg believers' prayers.

In 1977, a missionary from the UK was asked to take a month's ministry meetings as well as the Sunday gospel meetings at the Steenberg assembly. The believers at Ocean View wanted to attend each night but had no transportation.

Mike Schilder, an unsaved man but one of the few who had a vehicle, agreed to help transport them to the gospel hall in Steenberg. This was God's plan to reach Mike, since he heard the Gospel for the first time in his life at those meetings. The seed was planted, and by the close of the meetings, Mike was under deep conviction.



The Steenberg believers continued their outreach in Ocean View, and Mike started to attend those meetings, which led to his salvation that same year. A young woman, Debbie, also got saved shortly afterward, and eventually, they married. They were so keen to get the Gospel out, they converted their double garage into an attractive hall.

Assembly testimony begins

Shortly after getting saved, Mike witnessed to his brother, Eddie, who was on drugs and living immorally. Although Eddie was a tough nut to crack, the Holy Spirit was at work. Eddie joined the rough crew of a deep-sea fishing boat. One

day, while off the coast of Namibia and alone down in the engine room, he fell to his knees under great conviction of sin and trusted Christ as his Savior. When Eddie came up to the deck as a



new creature in Christ, his fellow fishermen could not believe the change they saw in him from that day onward. He and his wife, Brenda, have grown tremendously, and my late wife, Grace, and I guided them in how to go about doing personal work on the streets and beaches. Almost every day, they are out talking to someone about the Lord.



Left: Since trusting Christ in the 1970s, Debbie and Mike Schilder have been keen to share the Gospel. **Right (from top):** David and Grace (center) helped Brenda (right) and Eddie Schilder learn how to evangelize on Ocean View's streets and beaches; In 1984, a group of believers started the Ocean View assembly and continue to meet there today.



God had begun to work, and practically the whole Schilder family and a few others were saved. So, in 1984, the Steenberg believers felt it was time to set up a local assembly testimony in Ocean View. Besides the Breaking of Bread and gospel meeting, they started a Sunday school for about 80 children, who would pack into the hall. Later on, a charismatic group started a new church in the town, and with their exciting programs, the children were attracted to go there. The new assembly changed the cottage meeting into a gospel outreach meeting to try to reach them again. Besides going to a different home every Thursday evening, they would invite people to the gospel meeting each Sunday evening in the hall. The Lord saw fit to bless His Word, and some have been saved through this outreach.

Trophies of grace

Raymond had heard the Gospel through the cottage meeting at his home. Sometime later, he was sitting in his garden on a Saturday morning smoking some sort of drug. Suddenly, he threw his cigarette away and told his pals, "I'm through with all this. I'm trusting Christ as my Savior." Raymond had cancer, and at the last meeting we had in his flat, all his friends were present. He was too ill to sit, so he lay on his bed so he could hear all that was preached.

After the meeting, Mike, Eddie, and I gathered around his bed, where, with tears in his eyes, Raymond told us a little of his life. He had been a wild young man, disobedient and disrespectful, bringing sorrow to his parents. As a young fellow, Raymond started taking drugs, and for 32 years, he wasted his life and suffered all that goes with addiction. But God had His hand on Raymond and led him to repent and trust in Christ as his Savior.

Instead of requesting his own large church to take his funeral service, Raymond asked us to do so because he wished everyone to hear the simple gospel message preached clearly. The following week he passed away to be forever with the

Lord. His relatives rented a large hall, and we were told that it was the biggest funeral ever held in the town. What a privilege to preach the Gospel to such a large crowd of desperate people.

P., a more recent convert, had been on drugs for many years and had misled his three sons into the same lifestyle. Two of his boys died in drug-related shoot-outs. When P. was finally saved, he witnessed to his third son. At only 15 years old, his son was already hooked on drugs and refused to listen to or attend any meetings. In 2022, drug lords also shot him dead.

To hear such trophies of grace pray at the Breaking of Bread is a delight to one's heart.

To hear such trophies of grace pray at the Breaking of Bread is a delight to one's heart. Saved from the gutter, they just love the Lord with all their hearts.

Ocean View has never been a safe town. Mike once said, "Having the meetings at our home and trying to raise a family have been challenging. There have been times when we felt like moving out. But because of our commitment and responsibilities in the assembly, and His great love, we are still here and kept to this day."

After COVID-19 regulations eased, the prayer meeting and midweek Bible study restarted. However, the situation must be monitored each evening because of increased gunfire, which often makes it unsafe for believers to attend since they all have to walk to the hall.

Personal witness

J.'s mother died in childbirth, and his father, who lived on the streets and struggled with alcoholism, tried to bring him up. However, when J. turned seven, his dad told him he was big enough to look after himself, so J. started a career of begging

Top (left two photos): These men happily receive a sandwich. **Top (right two photos):** The Ocean View believers minister in homeless camps as well as on the streets and beaches.



and stealing. He went up the nearby mountain with nothing but a small piece of canvas as protection and lived alone up there, coming down to beg or steal each day.



Eddie and Brenda regularly feed kids who are on their way to school. They often fed J., and eventually, they asked him to come and live in a small room at the back of their house. They cleaned him up; cut his dirty, shaggy hair; and brought him to where they could help him on a regular basis. On Sunday evenings, they would bring him to the gospel meeting, and

finally, he trusted Christ as his Savior.

J. still hankered for the solitude of his mountain and, occasionally, would tell Eddie and Brenda, "I'm just going up the mountain for a few days to get some fresh air." The Rastafarians have tried to get him to join their group, but he seems to be resisting the pressure. Thankfully, he now has a job, which is a blessing.

C. is another one of the children Eddie and Brenda have tried to help. They would regularly invite him for Sunday lunch, and they would chat until it was time for the gospel meeting. As a seven-year-old, he would sit and listen respectfully to the Gospel. However, his father sells drugs and stopped him from going to the meetings because all the shooting in the town made it dangerous. The sad result is that now, as a 13-year-old, C. is a member of a small gang and fast becoming addicted to drugs.

Grace and wisdom

Many are hearing the Gospel through the testimony of this small assembly, which is a lighthouse amid life-destroying darkness and sin. This small assembly in Ocean View requests prayer: "Please pray for grace and wisdom and faithfulness to our soon-coming Lord as we live and witness among such violence and among such needy people." ■



David Croudace is commended from North York Gospel Chapel in York, Pennsylvania.

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“Many are hearing the Gospel through the testimony of this small assembly, which is a lighthouse amid life-destroying darkness and sin.”

Top (from left): Eddie, David, and Brenda rejoice with a new convert (second from left); Eddie witnesses to a man who lives on the streets. **Above (left):** Brenda is ready to share sandwiches and the Gospel.

Ask a Missionary

Missions work around the world is unique—different from what friends and family at home encounter day to day. So, to learn about life on the field while getting to know our missionaries better, we asked them to share their firsthand experience or advice.

QUESTION: How do you minister to those in your area who are elderly?

HONDURAS

Elvia Rodriguez



Ministering to elderly people is part of my calling. I talk to them, let them talk, and see what their needs are. I enjoy visiting the elderly home in Tela. Each day is unique. I demonstrate the love of Christ, sing songs, read the Bible with them, find words of consolation to brighten their lives, remind them to take their medications, and encourage them to follow the doctor's orders. Normally, I share a cup of coffee, comb their hair, trim their toenails, and if possible, help them shower and change their clothes and see if any need to be replaced. "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thesalonians 5:18)

SPECIAL AREAS

Rachel M.

Where we live, there are no residences for the elderly—they are considered the responsibility of their oldest son (or whomever he appoints). For this reason, they are rarely alone. However, they may be bored or feel lonely if they are not appreciated. The greatest honor you can show someone here is to visit him or her. So elderly people feel important and loved when a Westerner visits them. I visit them, go over their medications with them if they ask me to, and give them little token gifts.

OTHER OVERSEAS SVC.

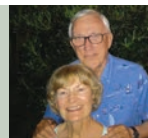
Neale & Barbara Goetsch



Each month, we and others from our assembly in Columbia, South Carolina, lead a time of worship and outreach at the Legacy, a seniors' home. For most, it is their only in-person time of fellowship, and they are so appreciative.

FRANCE

Maureen Crow



I encourage them through visits (sometimes taking little gifts with me) and praying with the person while I'm there and for them when I'm at home.

SOUTH KOREA

Doug & Ho Sook Neiswender



We seek to visit those who are not able to attend meetings. We visit the elderly in their homes, and we don't go empty-handed. We take home-prepared foods that the elderly like. One of their favorites is a homemade apple walnut loaf cake. We also have a time of fellowship and prayer. The visits are always appreciated, and they encourage us too.

ASK YOUR QUESTIONS! Visit [CMML.us/askamissionary](https://cmml.us/askamissionary) to submit your question—it might be selected for a future issue!