

# News from Normandy



April 2008

Normandy Vision, A Christian Mission working in Normandy, France

## Greetings from Normandy

It seems quite a while now since the last edition of *News from Normandy* – October 2007 in fact. There have been emails for those who have signed up to receive news updates, and of course there is always the web site!

In this edition of *News from Normandy* you can read about the Carol Service we held at Condé-sur-Noireau last December, together with the development of the work we are doing in that part of Normandy. There is also a report about the English-language services that we hold in Houlgate, together with an update about our plans for an Expo-Bible 2008.

There is also information about the English-language services for holiday makers planned for the third year running during July and August at Houlgate. In addition there are comments about other aspects of the work in which we are involved.

With the blessing and growth of our work among English-speaking residents in Normandy, with the prospective work during the summer – English language services for holidaymakers, a Bible Exhibition – there is much to be thankful for and also to pray about that the Lord's work will continue to grow and be blessed in this part of France.

Thank you to all those who continue to support us in so many ways. We really appreciate the prayers, encouragement and gifts that we receive.

*Philip & Simone Loose*

## Trustees Meeting...

We are hoping to hold the next meeting of Normandy Vision's Trustees in Portsmouth on Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup>. Please pray for that meeting, and for all the Trustees, so that we will move forwards in the directions in which the Lord is leading.

## Stewardship...

For those in the UK who use the Christian organisation *Stewardship* for their giving, Normandy Vision UK Trust now has a Sovereign Account. Gifts can be made to us through this account, including by the tax-efficient Gift Aid Scheme.

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## Condé-sur-Noireau

We started holding monthly services in *Le Temple* at Condé – home of the Eglise Réformée de France (ERF), that is, the French Reformed Church - in January this year after several months of holding meetings in homes in the area. We normally meet during the afternoon of the third Sunday of the month, beginning at 3pm. Services are followed by a time of “Coffee and Cakes” to which people can - and most do! - stay. During March we were able to hold two services - Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday.

Numbers attending have gone up from the mid-teens in January to more than 25 at our Palm Sunday service, though only about 20 came on Easter Sunday due to family commitments. New people are coming along to each service, so numbers continue to grow.



Inside the *Le Temple* at Condé

A joint (bilingual) service was held with the ERF on Good Friday evening. More than 30 were present, with English-speakers perhaps being in the majority. We sang hymns in French and English - simultaneously! - and also a metrical version of the Apostle's Creed in English. There were prayers, Bible readings and meditations on those readings, some in English and some in French. It was a time for all to be together, whatever nationality or



*Le Temple* at Condé and its surrounding area

language, and to think about the death of the Lord Jesus on Calvary for us.

During the Easter season there were copies of Lee Strobel's book “The Case for Easter” available free at the English services, and nearly all 20 copies were taken.

We would like to be able to hold more frequent meetings in the area around Condé, including mid-week meetings. At the moment the Council of the ERF at Condé have only given us permission to use the building one Sunday a month in general.

There is going to be a bilingual Sunday morning service with the ERF in June. We hope this will help develop closer ties of friendship and fellowship between French and English congregations that meet there.

There are a lot more English-speakers in this area of Normandy that we have yet to reach, especially those who have no or very little previous contact with a church. Maybe there are other methods of advertising these services to reach a wider audience? Special meetings could be one way to draw more people in. The Carol Service last December for example was attended by over 120 people. Concerts or seminars might well work, but we would need suitable venues and to find people to come along and perform or speak at them.

## Carol Service at Condé-sur-Noireau

Our English/French Carol Service - *Célébration de Noël* - was held at *le Temple Protestant*, Condé-sur-Noireau on Sunday, December 16th, 2007, beginning at 5pm. We had no idea how many people were likely to turn up, but in the end the place was packed out. There were even some people sitting on the stairs. How many people came? There were at least 120 there, and probably nearer 140. My estimate, which is only very approximate, was that there was a mix of about 70% Anglophone and 30% Francophone. There was also a mix of those who have regular church connections through to those who hardly ever, if at all, go to church. We had good newspaper coverage in the local journal, both before and after the Carol Service.

So many people helped out in lots of different ways: decorating the church, providing cakes etc. for the refreshments, Bible readings, singing in the choir, playing musical instruments, giving out the programmes, translating into French, setting up and operating the sound system, and many other ways besides... All these things helped to make the evening such a success, with many enthusiastic comments being made by those who came along and who evidently enjoyed



the service immensely. We even got an unexpected and spontaneous round of applause at the end! Most people stayed for the refreshments afterwards, which was a further opportunity to chat with people.

The most important aspect of the evening was, of course, that everybody had the opportunity, some maybe for the first time, whether in the Bible readings, or in the carols, or in the talk, to hear the good news of Christmas: "A Saviour has been born for you - he is Christ the Lord".

As a result of the Carol Service several people have started coming along to the monthly services in Condé.

## English Services at Houlgate

English language worship services are held at *le Temple* in Houlgate once a month. This building is home to Houlgate Evangelical Church. We tend to get about ten people at each service, including some French people. One English couple regularly travel up from the Condé area when their circumstances allow it, and a young couple who visit relations in the Houlgate area from time to time regularly come along to these services. We would like to see more people coming along each month, but the English-speaking population in the Houlgate area is a very small percentage compared with that of the region around Condé for example.



## News in Brief

### Expo-Bible 2008

We are planning to hold an **Expo-Bible** – Bible Exhibition – during August 2008 at *le Temple* in Houlgate. While the dates are not yet completely finalised, the likely dates are that the Expo-Bible will open on Wednesday, August 13th in time for the French national holiday of Friday, August 15th. It will stay open until either the 27th or 28th, or possibly though to the 31st.

We hope to get other people involved in the planning phase for this project, helping with the organisation needed leading up to the exhibition in mid-August.

The plan is essentially to hire professionally produced exhibition materials that cover many aspects of the Bible, from its contents through to its history in France, from ancient manuscripts through to modern translations. These display panels will be supplemented with other related materials, and we hope to have a range of Bible, books, booklets, leaflets, CDs, DVDs etc that visitors can buy or take for free. We will also need people to help with the exhibition, covering tasks as diverse as making cups of coffee through to talking to visitors about their faith.

We plan to hold meetings in parallel with the exhibition in which guest speakers will talk about various aspects of the Bible.

**More details on this project will be available soon.**



**Keep In Touch:** If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please get in touch with us at [info@normandyvision.org](mailto:info@normandyvision.org)

### Ladies English Bible Study

Simone runs this weekly house-group which at the moment consists of her and three other ladies: two French and one American. These are a great source of encouragement and blessing to Simone and the other ladies.

### French Bible Study

We hold a Bible-study in French in the home of a lady who because of ill-health is often unable to get out regularly. In addition to it helping her spiritually, it is also a training exercise for us to help improve our French-speaking abilities.

Simone also meets with two French ladies each week for a Bible study in French led by one of the French ladies. Simone finds these studies a challenge linguistically – but an enjoyable one.

### Summer Season English Services

For the third year running, during the holiday season we will be holding English-language Sunday worship services in the church at Houlgate. This year they will be from July 13<sup>th</sup> through to August 31<sup>st</sup>, starting at 9am. Some publicity has gone out to Evangelical publications in the UK preparing their lists of summer and holiday churches. More publicity will be needed in due course, both in the UK and locally for when the holiday season starts.

### Euro Exchange Rate

Since last autumn the cost of converting pounds into euros has risen substantially – well over 15% and getting on towards 20%. This, coupled with French inflation, is not helping our budget much! This of course also applies to many missionaries and pastors working in France, who get much of their support from either the UK or the USA.