

# IMPRESSIONS

Vol.5.1

Publishing in French: What It Takes

A publication of Synergie Francophone



## BRIDGING THE FRENCH PUBLISHING GAP



  
Synergie  
FRANCOPHONE

Together... planting, watering, growing fruitfulness



Synergie  
FRANCOPHONE

## CONTENTS

### Editorial

Envisioning Elephants:  
Publishing in French

02

### Feature

Encouraging Signs:  
Opportunities for Christian  
Publishing in Africa

03

### Perspective

Faithful to the Word:  
Publishing Biblical Books  
in France

06

### Testimony

Called to Write  
for the Kingdom

07

### News

08

## CREDITS

SF President of the Board  
Ray Sanford

SF Executive Director  
Angela Brandle

Editorial Committee  
Angela Brandle, Lynn Lockwood,  
Jordan Lockwood, Mary Ann Miller,  
Elise Teegne

Editor  
Elise Teegne

Copy Editors  
Angela Brandle, Lynn Lockwood,  
Eileen Martin

Design  
Pilgrim Communications

# Envisioning Elephants: Publishing in French

I believe we can all remember reading an article or book that touched us deeply, the words meeting a specific need of the moment. Great publishing does the same. It is all about placing the right materials in the hands of the right people at the right time.

Those who have engaged in Bible study have likely experienced the importance of investigating the historical and cultural context of a passage. A critical element to the success of SF's ministry is to find publications that are as culturally and contextually close to readers as possible, meeting their unique needs.

However, these ideals quickly get shaped by practical matters: finding the right materials, then printing and shipping them to where they are needed. As you can imagine, the broader the publication, the more it must be market-driven to cover printing and delivery costs.

This creates a challenge for us. Books that would sell well in the European or Canadian markets are often culturally inappropriate for readers from African countries or the French-speaking islands. Even when we find a good book, the printing and shipping costs pose a difficulty. In Europe, a publisher often prints 1,000 copies or more in a run. But in Africa, the demand may only be measured in the tens of copies needed. Additionally, the problems with international shipping and customs only continue to grow. By God's grace, we have been able to work more closely with print-on-demand centers in French-

speaking Africa. This allows us to print only how much is needed, when it is needed, and where it is needed.

The last important factor in publishing is the connection between the writer and the reader. This gives rise to our commitment to give voice to writers from French-speaking Africa and other French-speaking minority locations around the world. These voices are critical first in speaking to their own people. One excellent example is the *Africa Study Bible*, featuring study notes

written exclusively by African leaders and theologians. Some 100 French-speaking Africans contributed to that Bible, and leaders all across the continent of Africa already value this unique resource.

But the voices of global leaders are not only valuable in speaking to their peers. It is critical for all of us in the worldwide Church to gain a better understanding of who God is. Many of you have heard the old story of three blind people describing an elephant. One said he was long and skinny like a snake; another said he was shaped like a large leaf; and the last said he was like a large tree trunk. None of them could envision the whole elephant because each only felt a piece. Likewise, influenced by our cultural upbringings, we each can only see a piece of who God is, and it takes all of us together from all the cultures of the world to even glimpse his full majesty and beauty.

As you read this issue's articles, I trust they will bless you as you see how God is at work in the francophone world.

Ray Sanford, President of the Board



Credit: Ray Sanford



Credit: Bagudekia Alobeyo

# Encouraging Signs: Opportunities for Christian Publishing in Africa

A condensed version of an article originally by *Africa Speaks*

**B**y 2050, Africa will have the largest youth population globally. African youth, if reached and disciplined today, will become tomorrow's global missions workers. Godly, professionally equipped young people could be the driving force and energy behind an enduring Christian publishing industry in Africa. We have an opportunity over the next 35 years to reach the greatest ever number of

African youth, and Christian publishing will prove indispensable in the spiritual formation and development of the Christian mind. There is great need to rekindle a love for reading among youthful African Christians, to increase access to sound Christian books, and to produce Christian literature that responds to the specific needs of young Africans who lack hope.

*Continued on page 4*

*Continued from page 3*

African capitals are growing and evolving, as are churches. The Christian population is large, and the number of readers is growing. Although there are many local languages in Africa, key languages such as English, French, Swahili, and others are broadly understood.

Real economic growth in most African countries over the last eight years provides opportunities for individuals to open stores and promote bookselling and reading. Publishers might consider how to grow distribution through street vendors or through partnerships with local ministries. Additionally, many African school systems are open to using Christian literature.

Manufacturing opportunities—whether print-on-demand or traditional commercial press—have barely been touched. Print-on-demand systems have enabled many local authors to get their books in the hands of readers. Previously, these authors could not be accommodated in conventional printing due to the capital investment required. A relatively inexpensive print-on-demand system enables international distribution. Organizations like Publish4Africa would like to see a broad print-on-demand network that would serve traditional international publishers, grassroots authors and organizations, and self-publishers.

The global church is increasingly aware of the need to develop culturally relevant and contextualized Christian literature, since ignorance of culture can produce blindness when addressing needs. The massive growth of Christianity in the southern hemisphere, particularly in Africa, offers an opportunity for Christian publishing to flourish there. The African church is becoming more aware of its role in global Christianity and world missions. It will need resources to help train and equip its people in this role.

Some of the best communicators of the Gospel are waiting to be discovered and developed in Africa. With proper support and development, local writers can

provide quality local content that addresses local realities. So many people in Africa have stories to tell that need to be heard and read beyond their local areas; theologians have fresh and contextual messages for Africa that need to be heard and read—within Africa and beyond. The work of talented Christian writers, artists, and leaders can influence African societies for Jesus Christ and for the Gospel. A growing number of important African voices are speaking engagingly from their context and responding to African realities. Works such as the *Africa Bible Commentary* and, more recently, the *Africa Study Bible* demonstrate the kind of robust creative diversity African contributors have to offer.

**Some of the best communicators of the Gospel are waiting to be discovered and developed in Africa.**

Africans, despite their poverty, are reading more and more Christian books. There is a market, interest, and need for Christian literature that will challenge, motivate, and guide them. The continent needs more books on African realities, and particularly books written by French-speaking African Christians. Through technology and media, the church in Africa, particularly young people, is aware of Western influence (homosexuality, divorces in evangelical churches, etc.). They need literature that addresses these topics in the African context.

Adequate and affordable discipleship resources have lagged behind the explosion of evangelism on the continent, leaving the soil an inch deep and a mile wide. African church leaders need widely available leadership-development and Bible-study materials. African readers need more visually-oriented literature, more visual storytelling, more images and words working together to tell the Story—tracts, picture books, comics, graphic novels—produced by Africans for Africans.

African publishers, ministries, churches, and authors must work together to build the systems and the scale the industry needs to flourish.

*Enjoy the full article here: <https://africaspeaks.global/encouraging-signs-opportunities-for-christian-publishing-in-africa>.*

# How SF Empowers Publishing in Africa

Seventy years ago, SF was a trailblazer in setting up Christian publishing in French in Europe. God has expanded our vision to assist with developing publishing efforts on the African continent.

Last year, SF, in partnership with Publish4Africa, Hope4Congo, and African Enterprise, helped launch the Oasis Print-on-Demand (POD) service and bookshop in Kinshasa, DRC. Books printed have already exceeded the goals. Our “Read Right Now” project is raising funds to subsidize the center and buy printing supplies and paper to keep production going.

Our Sunday school curriculum manuals have had a facelift to appeal to a new generation of African children. They will be printed at the POD service in Kinshasa. We are seeking sponsors to fund “Train the Teacher” to provide these manuals to thousands of Sunday school teachers who will influence the largest ever youth population for Christ.

The youth of Africa face threats of war and political unrest. Some will be displaced, starve, or be taken as child soldiers. SF partners Daphrose Muteho and Jean-Pasteur Katavo work tirelessly to get Bibles into their hands and provide trained disciple-makers and libraries of Christian books for their schools. Having come to Christ myself as a teenager and read through two boxes of Christian books lent from a teacher, I realize what a life-changing effect that can have. Gifts of \$10 to \$1000 will help us place books in high schools through our “Adopt a High School” project.

The African Leadership Study, initiated by Tyndale House Foundation, confirmed that Africans are reading, but Christians mostly read non-African authors because they are unaware of the African Christian writers who are applying God’s Word in their own cultures. Africa Speaks, an international network of professionals committed to a flourishing Christian publishing industry in Africa, has set up a database of leading Christian authors in each country and features best-selling titles on its website.<sup>1</sup> SF is looking for



sponsors to support budding African Christian writers through our “Culturally Correct” project.

**To join in our efforts to encourage writing, publishing, and printing in Africa, please visit our website, join us in prayer, or send a check to SF, naming one of these projects.**

—SF Executive Director Angela Brandle

<sup>1</sup> Information in this paragraph was gleaned from Debunked: “If you want to hide something from an African put it in a book” by Africa Speaks. Available here: <https://africaspeaks.global/popular-fallacy-about-africa-debunked-by-the-africa-leadership-study/>.



Credit: Fabrice and Sylviane Dubus-Decker

# Faithful to the Word: Publishing Biblical Books in France

By: Elise Teegne

In a world full of misguided messages and masquerading lies, the need for quality, biblical books is pressing. Sylviane and Fabrice Dubus-Decker are working to meet that need. After managing a bookstore in Belgium, the couple found roles in IT at Éditions Clé, a publishing house based in Lyon that offers resources in French to help others understand the Bible and communicate the Gospel.

In a recent conversation with SF, Sylviane and Fabrice described the complex process of publishing a book. First, a committee of pastors and professors carefully chooses about eight to ten manuscripts each year that are most needed in the French-speaking world. According to Sylviane, the books should be “rich biblically without being inaccessible.” Fabrice added that the subject should be relevant to the church. Éditions Clé has recently published books on veganism and other current ethical questions.

Once the book has been chosen, Sylviane, in collaboration with Director Michel Philippe, formats the book in a Word document, creating consistently-formatted titles for each chapter and styling the biblical references, verses, and quotations to prepare the text for layout.

In the revision stage, Sylviane checks the spelling and grammar to ensure *le bon français*. She also reformulates sentences, so they don’t sound translated

from English. “A book in French must sound French!” Sylviane laughed.

After Sylviane marks all of the needed changes, she sends it to the author, who answers questions and validates or rejects the corrections. The dialogue continues back and forth until everyone reaches an agreement.

Sylviane then embarks on the painstaking process of ensuring accurate bibliographic references. In a newsletter, Sylviane and Fabrice wrote that bibliographic research ensures “that all of the quotations are properly referenced, or quoted in French if the cited work has already been translated.” At the library, Sylviane can at times spend six or seven hours researching. “It takes a lot of concentration,” she said.

At the layout stage, Fabrice ensures that titles are visible but not too imposing, that the book is easy to navigate, and that the footers are consistent, to name a few of his tasks. All of these details—from hyphenating words to numbering pages—allow readers to concentrate on the text. “A good layout is when a person doesn’t have any problems and says, ‘Ah, it’s easy to read,’” Fabrice says. “It’s always the details.”

Once the text is ready, a graphic designer creates two to four cover ideas for the publisher. Sylviane, with

*Continued on page 8*

# Called to Write for the Kingdom

By: Ivanova Nono Fotso

**M**y first published text cost me a week's pocket money, or five hundred CFA francs at the time, for an hour at the cybercafé to type a text of around 400 words, one letter at a time. I was 20 years old, studying hotel management and catering. I loved reading, devouring everything I could get my hands on, including books that didn't always edify me. I didn't know yet that this passion for literature was a gift from God, intended for his service.

That day at the cybercafé, I submitted a text to the short story section of the francophone women's magazine *AMINA*. My story was published a year later. In total, I sent in four short stories, published in 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2010.

In 2009, working as a housekeeper in a Christian guest house, I took a spiritual retreat to ask God to guide me in his plan for me. There I realized that my passion for writing came from Him and was for his service. So, I resigned and enrolled at the Faculty of Arts to study French literature.

Before that, I had gathered the contacts available in Christian publications to offer my collaboration. There was only one response: Sharon Mumper at Magazine Training International (MTI) forwarded my message to Greg Burgess at PJA (Publications pour la Jeunesse Africaine). That's how I became part of the great ministry of Christian publishing, participating in projects such as the *Africa Study Bible* and the comics collection *Éclats Bandes Dessinées d'Afrique*. I've also taken part in publishing conferences organised by Media



Credit: Ivanova Nono Fotso

Associates International (MAI), MTI, PJA, and Comix35. In 2013, my first children's book *Même Pas Peur!* was published (PJA, France), followed by *Imani, the Little Doctor* in 2022 (STEP Publishers, Ghana).

One of my main challenges was finding stable work. Temporary translation and writing projects were not stable sources of income. When I enrolled at the Faculty of Arts, many people told me that I should have kept my housekeeping job and written in my spare time. But I wanted to be trained, and I wanted writing to become my main activity.

However, I had to recognise that my course of study didn't automatically lead me into a profession, as would have been the case if I'd gone to teacher training college instead. For a long time, I didn't even know what to write in the "profession" box on forms, though I had brief experiences as a teacher and later as an editor in a fledgling publishing house.

I ended up registering with the National Employment Fund where I was advised to add professional training to my Master's degree. So, I later received training to become a teacher of French as a foreign language.

*Continued on page 10*

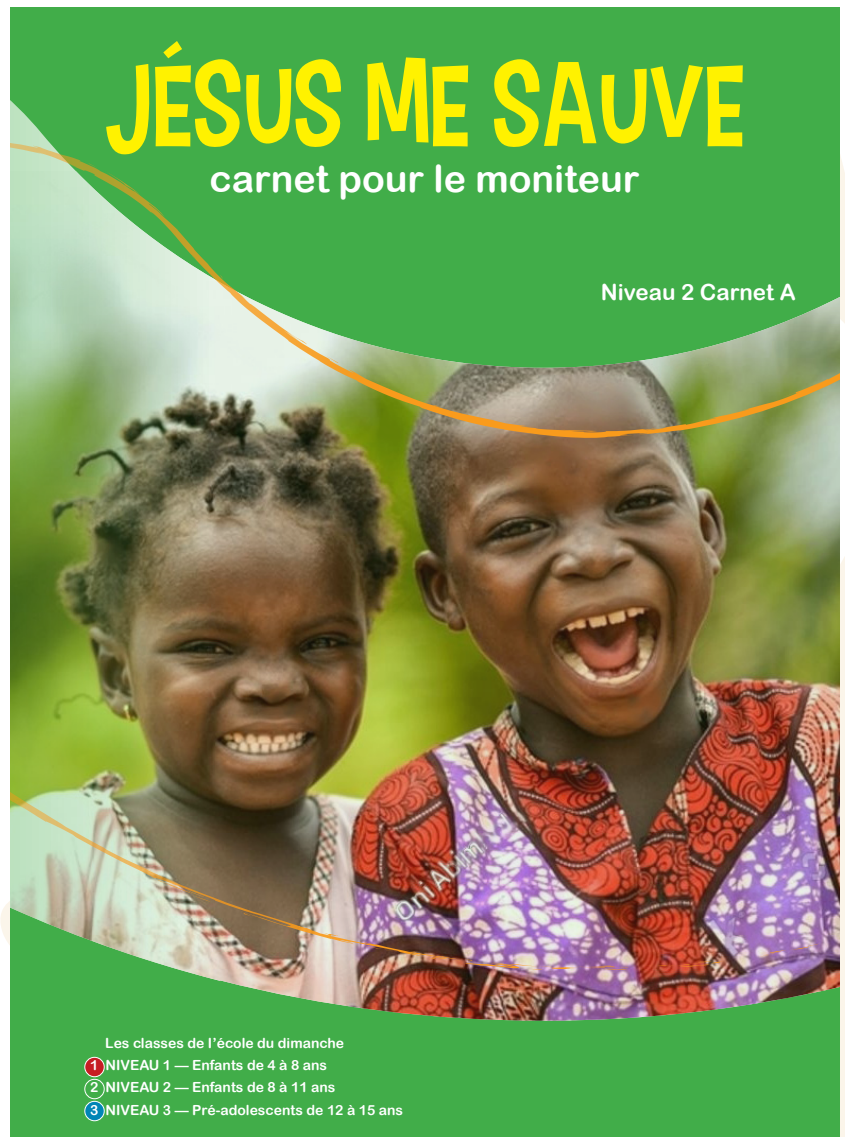
## “THEY LOOK AFRICAN!”

By: Angela Brandle

Our popular Sunday school curriculum has had a facelift! Otto Van Stelten and Akona Gila, graphic designers with Pilgrim Communications in South Africa, have done beautiful work to make the 17 manuals look up-to-date and child-friendly, showcasing colors, designs, and photos appropriate for the French-speaking islands and African countries to which we send them.

“They look African!” said President of the Board Ray Sanford. We will start by printing at the Print-on-Demand (POD) center in Kinshasa, DRC. Digital PDFs are available to partners who wish to print their own copies.

Please pray with us that the biblical and creative content in a new wrapper blesses and bears fruit among a new generation of teachers and children, just as the previous version did for their predecessors.



### Continued from page 6: Faithful to the Word

the help of the director and president, writes a synopsis for the back cover, which can include remarks from the president, extracts, and recommendations. Many stages of re-reading follow.

To launch the book, Sylviane communicates with bookstores and distributors, announcing the launch date, promotional videos, and a description of why the book would be useful to the public. Having been booksellers themselves, Fabrice and Sylviane know how to work with bookstore owners.

The whole publication process can take about a year.

When asked what encourages Sylviane and Fabrice to continue persevering in this complex labor of

book publication, Fabrice shared how he had been personally shaped by biblical literature. “There are so many so-called ‘Christian’ works that are easy to find,” he said, but much fewer that remain biblically faithful.

It is often worldly thinking, not the Bible, that shapes churches. But Sylviane and Fabrice seek to be defenders of doctrine. Sylviane said, “It’s important to continue to fight sometimes because it’s not always comfortable...It’s something we have committed to and continue to commit to.”

As Jesus said in the Gospels, the harvest is ready for gathering: “There are so few workers in this field,” Fabrice said. “Even so, it’s a motivation to continue to hold onto, so that the work continues.”



## 60 YEARS OF PRINTING FOR GOD

By: Angela Brandle

In 1965, the Evangelical Mission of the French Alps (MEAF) began a printing operation run by missionaries in the basement of the Saint Albain castle. Four years later, the operation became IMEAF (Imprimerie de la Mission Évangélique des Alpes Françaises) and moved to its current site at la Bégude de Mazenc, France, where it has expanded several times to house new equipment, stock, and offices. Staying abreast of developments in digital printing to offer highly professional services, Iméaf sends its printed materials across the world.

The France Impressions Team (FIT) SF sent to Iméaf last year was impressed by the size of the operation. The whir and click of machines (one even plays “Camptown Races” after finishing its cycle) and the

constant activity of staff working at every stage of book production, quickly communicate how busy the print shop is!

SF caught up with Director Nicolas Devins in January to ask about opportunities and challenges in the most significant print shop serving the French-speaking world. This year Iméaf celebrates 60 years of producing millions of copies of Christian materials that change lives, such as the half-million Gospels printed in December and January.

After much deliberation, Iméaf is about to appoint a new team member to manage business and development and serve as the director’s executive assistant. Because of limited financial resources, this

*Continued on page 10*



IMEAF Director Nicolas Devins in the print shop. Credit: Angela Brandle

Continued from page 9: **60 Years of Printing for God**

appointment is long overdue. The energy to find and orientate a key new team member is also in short supply for an overly stretched team. Financially and operationally, they are moving forward by faith.

Iméaf suffered a financial setback when a “clever” accountant embezzled over €130,000. COVID took its toll too. Additional stressors have been Nicolas’s chronic back pain, the months-long absence of prepress graphic designer Jacques-Olivier Nicolas (hit by a car while motorbiking), and an MS flare up that put Nathan Phillips, the only other prepress worker, in the hospital for several days. Iméaf aims to return to full capacity and sustainable financial health.

With fewer than 2% of the French population being evangelical Christian and even fewer skilled for the printing industry, finding staff is a challenge. Industrious non-Christians and Christians of various walks come together to work in the same space each day. Understanding and leading people of such disparate backgrounds in the common cause of producing Christian materials requires sensitivity and God-given wisdom.

Wanting to communicate the vision and ministry of Iméaf and find investors, donors, volunteers, and missionaries, Devins and the Iméaf board have been collaborating with partner Alexandre Dantin. Dantin is helping with promotions, including a video about the print shop’s ministry that we will share when it is available. Nicolas Devins asks us to pray “that God will inspire [them] for [their] management, vision, and service.” Amen!



IMEAF Director Nicolas Devins. Credit: Angela Brandle

SF is helping Iméaf by:

- Seeking new missionary team members for Iméaf. Contact [Angela.Brandle@synergiefr.org](mailto:Angela.Brandle@synergiefr.org). Training can be provided.
- Raising prayers and financial support for Iméaf. You can give to the Iméaf project (IMEAF Printshop France) on our website [www.SynergieFrancophone.org/give](http://www.SynergieFrancophone.org/give).
- Sending summer France Impressions Teams (FIT) to lighten the load and encourage the on-site staff.

Continued from page 7: **Called to Write...**

During that time, God taught me not to depend on immediate financial resources, but to trust Him to provide for me when the time was right. In 2022, I was blessed to be hired by Africa Speaks as an editor and writer.

A significant experience came in 2023, when I was sent by Africa Speaks on board the *Logos Hope*, a floating book fair. For ten months I wrote the stories of what God was doing through the ship’s visit on the east and south coasts of Africa. Seeing people come

from far and wide to buy books for their families made me think about my own books, including several Bibles, which I kept practically under lock and key at home, because most of them are gifts and some dedicated to me. I realized that these books were only of value if they were read. So, on my return, I made them available to my nephews, undertaking to read aloud with them from time to time.

As a writer and reader for the Kingdom, I understand that my calling is not limited to literary projects but encompasses all aspects of my life.

**Erratum:** On page 13 of issue 4.2 of *Impressions*, the IQ team included Dr. Amy Lynelle, Josie Myer, Selah Strassheim, Fifi Shultz, Rachel DeWitt (left to right).



Teaching by Pastor Jacques, 2024. Credit: Jacques Luwaku

## NEW PARTNER, PROJECTS, AND PRINTING PRESS

By: Angela Brandle

Early this year, an evangelist ministering to the Congolese military appealed to spiritual leader and trainer Jacques Luwaku. He asked Pastor Jacques to resume the training courses that had been so useful in equipping evangelists. He also asked for books to provide evangelists with deeper learning and stimulate them to write about ministry.

Pastor Jacques is a new Beautiful Feet partner introduced to SF by our longtime partner Alain Stamp who pioneered the training of evangelists and mentors in French-speaking Africa. Pastor Jacques was also one of 10,000 people who attended the Lausanne 4 congress in South Korea last September to study and lay hold of the opportunities and needs of world mission from now until 2050.

Since 2019 the Lausanne Movement has been part of a strategic, collaborative effort to disciple the nations of the world. Pastor Jacques drank deeply at the conference, bringing back to the DRC both vision and tools to equip Congolese churches for the task before them: preparing their people to share the Gospel responsibly in their workplaces and communities.

Pastor Jacques is organizing a training for three

hundred evangelists in May. He has asked SF to provide *What is the Mission of the Church?* (Kevin de Young and Greg Gilbert) in French for each evangelist. Not only is this book out of stock in France, but the French government has eliminated the economical book bag postal service. This is the perfect opportunity to print

the book at the Oasis Print-on-Demand (POD) center in Kinshasa! BLF Éditions has kindly given permission to print all its titles there.

Pastor Jacques's second conference, training mentors to coach young couples to build strong Christian marriages, will take place in August. The Lausanne conference's teaching of the importance of healthy marriages in the church and Pastor Jacques's own experience of reconciling, through counseling, a young couple that had split after a year of marriage, inspired him to set up the training. SF is trusting

God to provide funds to print one hundred copies of *Sacred Marriage* (Gary Thomas) in French, again using the POD center in Kinshasa.

We thank God for this new partner and pray for his projects and the books we print to produce fruit to strengthen Congolese churches and their outreach ministries.

**This is the perfect opportunity to print the book at the Oasis Print-on-Demand (POD) center in Kinshasa!**

## WAYS TO SERVE GOD WITH SYNERGIE FRANCOPHONE

Opportunities in France: **Graphic designer; Offset printing operator/apprentice; Printshop production worker/stock manager; French-speaking administrator/bookkeeper; computer-assisted publishing.** Some roles could be done remotely from the US or Canada.

**Ambassadors in the US** to advocate for those without God's Word.  
Full or part time. Please contact [Angela.Brandle@synergiefr.org](mailto:Angela.Brandle@synergiefr.org).



**PUBLICATIONS  
CHRÉTIENNES**

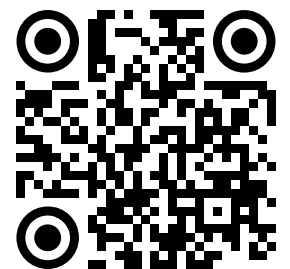
The Quebecois publishing house **Publications Chrétienne** is building its team. For over 60 years, the organization has served the Church through providing essential resources to further the Great Commission. The board of directors is seeking talented, Gospel-driven individuals to fulfill many roles: **general manager, operations manager, supply manager, graphic designers, editors, translators, reviewers, delivery managers**, as well as **volunteers** to liaise with their local communities.

Interested **Canadian** candidates can reach out to [rh@pubchret.org](mailto:rh@pubchret.org), while interested **Americans** can reach out to [Angela.Brandle@synergiefr.org](mailto:Angela.Brandle@synergiefr.org).

## MISSIONS STATEMENT

*Impressions* magazine exists to share stories of what God is doing through SF, to educate readers about the French-speaking world, to include a platform for French-speaking voices, and to inspire readers' engagement with the francophone community—all for the glory of God.

**NOTE** After prayerful deliberation, we have decided to remove "formerly known as BLF USA" from the front cover of *Impressions* magazine. The expression was kept as a bridge for our readership during the transition of rebranding from "BLF USA" to "Synergie Francophone" in 2021. Though we recognize and honor the vital role BLF USA has played in our history, we feel it is time to move forward fully as Synergie Francophone.



**Mail:** Synergie Francophone, 300 Amanda Court, Oregon City, OR 97045 | 971-274-6867  
Please **mail gifts** to Synergie Francophone, PO Box 629, Wheaton, IL 60187 | 630-221-1980  
Or give online at <https://synergiefrancophone.org/give>. Our projects are listed on our website.

*Together... planting, watering, growing fruitfulness*



*Impressions* is a publication of Synergie Francophone  
©2025 Synergie Francophone

**Envelope provided for your response.** To find out more, please visit [SynergieFrancophone.org](https://SynergieFrancophone.org).