IMPRESSIONS

Vol.5.2



Together... planting, watering, growing fruitfulness

God's Invitation to Do Things Together

omething inside inspires us to want to make a difference in our world. This desire, I believe, is God-given: He, too, desires that we make a difference as we follow Him. In this issue, we will show you examples of how ordinary people like you are making a difference in the French-speaking world.

In reading the stories, it becomes obvious that making a difference happens most often and best when we work with others. One of the challenges of English versions of Scripture is that the same word "you" can be either singular or plural. So much of

Scripture is written from a plural perspective. Looking at Adam, God said that it was not good for man to be alone. This flows from the reality that God Himself is not singular but trinitarian: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Created in his image, we are invited by God to do things together.

Jesus did not just minister with the 12 disciples; an entire group of followers went with Him. Scripture records how ladies provided the infrastructure needed to accomplish the ministry Christ had been given. Each follower had a critical role in helping God's plans unfold.

One trend I see happening globally is God calling ordinary people to have extraordinary impact for the Kingdom. Christ spent much of his time explaining this upside-down view of how things operate. He taught that the poor

widow's two small coins had greater value than the offerings of the rich and that, in the simplicity of meeting others' needs, his followers were in fact serving and blessing Him (Matt. 25:34-45). Christ calls all of us to serve and bless others. Therefore, we all have a part in God's global mission.

In this issue, you will glimpse how God is using workers on the field, in board rooms, and at home churches to join SF in touching the lives of French speakers around the world. From packing boxes to making videos, each has contributed an important step in reaching the francophone world with the Good News of Jesus' love.

In this task of taking Christ's love to the world, God has a unique role for each of us. We all share in the Great Commission. Yet as expressed in Ephesians 4, there are multiple needed roles for the Gospel to move forward. Some believers go long-term and open new ministries. Some go shortterm to teach or provide practical care. Some stay and pray while others give and make ministry possible. Each person is critical in making a difference in our world.

As you read these stories, I pray that you can find yourself in them. May God help you know how you can be part of making a significant difference in taking the Good News to the peoples of the French-speaking world.

Ray Sanford, President of the Board

Windows into the World: How Serving with SF **Changed One Church Family**

By: Jordan Lockwood

hen I think of SF and Mountain View Presbyterian Church (MTVPC), the two feel naturally entwined. Growing up, I attended MTVPC, and SF was the mission organization I cared about most. My mom worked with SF regularly;¹ lots of family friends worked there full-time; church friends had gone on a long-term SF mission trip to France; and my family had even visited the print shop in France a time or two. To me, SF and MTVPC seemed like two branches of the same tree.

Recently, another SF team member and I had the pleasure of interviewing some of MTVPC's congregation to talk about how the connection between SF and MTVPC has grown over the years and



Tracy serving on the 2005 Impressions trip. Credit: Tracy Raymond



MTVPC pastor Dan Jones commissioning former SF Board Member Lynn Lockwood before her service with SF in June 2025. Credit: Lynn Lockwood

how the two ministries continue to work together in a mutually beneficial relationship. Some MTVPC members contribute financially to SF; some give time (or write articles!); and some venture out on Impressions trips, where they can see the inner workings of the mission and help it run smoothly.

When MTVPC members Ken and Tracy Raymond visited the BLF print shop in Marpent, France, in 2005, they were kept plenty busy painting, clearing out new space for storage, and leaving tracts in local mailboxes. In a ministry like SF, there's work to fit almost any skill set. There was time for fun, too, including sightseeing in Paris and hearing testimonies from local missionaries. "I think it was good to go 'on a mission trip,'" Tracy recalls, "to get a sense of another place and culture. We learned a lot about the challenges missionaries are presented with and the ways that God uses those challenges to help get them where God wants them to go." The missionaries probably appreciated the American goodies the Raymonds brought, too!

Like the Raymonds, Mark and Heidi Fuller found their 2007 Impressions trip a rich learning experience. "Everyone in the world has more in common with you than difference," Mark said. "When I think of France

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¹Learn more about Lynn Lockwood's service on SF's board in "The Best Possible Time to Join," *Impressions* Vol. 4.2 (2024): https://synergiefrancophone.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Impressions_4.2_no-bleed-2.pdf.

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now, I think of actual people." Looking back, the couple describe a sense of satisfaction from their work tuck pointing, scaffolding, and roofing: "There's a physical thing that we worked on that will be there after we leave." For the Fullers, this sacrificial way of being present to serve and building relationships is a way of spreading the Gospel.

That's the kind of experience that sticks with you, that follows you home and doesn't let you forget. Today, the Fullers keep up with SF's newsletter and stay in touch with some MTVPC congregants who do the same. In fact, their experience knit them together more deeply into their congregation. They've also found that the Impressions trip made a great foundation for other ministry; all three of their kids are involved in scouting, youth group, and community service. "You see a need and you step up and fill it," Mark said. With such a window into missions, it's that much easier to start putting

There's plenty of good work being done back home at MTVPC, too. Director of Family Ministries Caleb Yost shared

another foot into that

broader world.



"There's a physical

thing that we worked

on that will be there

after we leave."

about what SF looks like from the perspective of youth ministry and what the future could be. While there aren't any immediate plans for a youth Impressions trip,

> it's certainly not out of the question. Hearing the perspectives of MTVPC families (including the Fullers!) who had gone on these trips, Caleb says that a mission trip "would do a beautiful job expanding perspectives... missions work is so important everywhere." Caleb has

gone to Senegal with MTVPC and distributed books purchased by SF. Seeing how serving with SF has influenced those who have participated "is beautiful," and makes him "feel connected across the world."

The mutuality of this relationship is amazing. SF benefits by seeing its message spread through the enthusiastic word-of-mouth of returning missionaries, by having direct help at the print shop, and by finding ongoing support from a devoted prayer network (led most notably by MTVPC member Jeannine King, who organized vigils before passing away this year). MTVPC gets a new window into an oft-underexplored corner of ministry and to experience that effort alongside a passionate ministry team. And in all of this, the greater Church benefits from a growing network of shared support and pooled efforts.

For those considering serving on an SF mission trip, the Fullers offer enthusiastic encouragement: if a need aligns with your giftings, go for it. Even if you feel you lack the necessary talent, you can build skills and even discover gifts you were unaware of. "Take the chance if you're shy or introverted; do it anyway because it really does open your horizons socially and spiritually. I can't recommend it enough. It's always worth doing."



Caleb Yost presenting an Africa Study Bible purchased by SF to nurse Abdou in a Senegalese village. Credit: Lynn Lockwood

SF Missionary swy By: Roger Saxe

he story begins in 2005 when I was teaching a Sunday school class on missions. At the end of the class, I gave several ways to serve the Lord in mission, and the Lord directed me to one of those options: BLF.² My late wife Rosemary and I went to Marpent in April 2007 primarily working at the print shop and left two years later.

I am convinced the Lord sent us at a special time, a window of opportunity, when there was a real need for us to fill vacancies just prior to the shop's closing.

Having previously worked in commercial print shops for most of my productive life, I was acquainted with operating practically all the equipment. Both of us had previously served in Marseille with Arab World Ministries while I ran the printing operation. Even though Rosemary had never worked in a print shop, she was able to shrink-wrap books and fill orders for shipping, among other significant jobs.

It was helpful and enjoyable to work with the Impressions teams from the US. They always brought a taste of home and an opportunity to enlarge our understanding of BLF's support system. We kept a small supply of New Testaments and other literature in our car so that when we went to friteries or elsewhere we could give copies to the employees. Our car was parked in a parking lot at our apartment, and on one occasion we had a Bible in the back seat. The next morning we discovered the Bible was missing and in its place was a dog leash. Apparently someone thought that the Bible was more valuable than the dog leash! We began to wonder if that might be a new, unique way of distributing Bibles in France.

The people we worked with at the shop became close friends. I still have communication with Bill Kapitaniuk. I am 89 years old and feeling the effects of those years, but Bill is in his nineties and doing more than I could physically: quite an amazing man. It was also special to meet Bud Kroeker and to continue to have communication with him and Charlotte. Of

> course. Nathan and Annie Phillips have continued to be in close relationship.

It was a unique experience working with fellow believers to produce literature that had lifechanging, eternal value. After 16 years, I cannot say how many Bibles, books, or Gospel tracks were produced. But of course the number was significant. Words are significant. Words make an impression and when recorded in literature continue to make purposeful impressions. God made us communicators; God spoke; and what He spoke was Good News: words meant to communicate

God's mind, in words that impress upon us the grace and glory of Jesus.

My wife Judith and I continue to be engaged with SF, primarily in promoting SF in our mission meetings. We continue to support Nathan and Annie Phillips, which began while I was married to Rosemary. There has been a positive response and purposefulness to have continued to be involved with SF as much as possible. And of course we continue to uphold SF before the Lord. We still have it all in our hearts.

Editor's note: Roger continued to serve by recruiting some of the 2024 Impressions team members from his church.

² Bibles and Literature in French, now known as Synergie Francophone

He Kept His Eyes on Jesus: Appreciation of the Faith-Filled Life of Tom Rice

By: Angela Brandle

om Rice loved the Lord and sought to keep Him first in everything. Leading BLF through changes, he sought wisdom from the Lord. "Tom was willing to be bold while being a gentle leader," said Ray Sanford, SF board president. "For the future of SF, Tom knew things had to change. He...made the key changes that set the stage for what God is doing today." SF Director of Operations John Sauceda describes Tom as "very-team focused, making every effort to ensure people were on the same page. He...did not sweep things under the rug but moved towards resolution with empathy. He would get frustrated when things did not resolve as planned, yet he never gave up!"

"Every time I met Tom, he was an **encourager**, and whenever possible he shared **wise words** to help the French ministry advance for Christ."

Tom played a huge part in bringing BLF Editions (BLFE) publishing to maturity. Already legally constituted in France, BLFE became an independent Christian publishing business on Tom's watch, not only supplying biblical books to Europe but relaunching



Credit: Fifi Schultz

its missionary arm by donating pastors' libraries to francophone countries (where the printed word is preferred) while developing a vast e-book presence in Europe.

"Tom brought a seriousness to a business meeting, but he knew how to enjoy times of fellowship outside the meeting," said Toe-Blake Roy, director of BLF Canada. "Every time I met Tom, he was an encourager, and whenever possible he shared wise words to help the French ministry advance for Christ." Although he did not know French, "Tom had a fervent desire to share Jesus with people he met, focusing this desire on reaching French speakers around the world through literature produced by BLF Editions. God gifted Tom with strong leadership and administrative abilities which benefitted us all as we managed missional support for BLF during a time of transition and expansion of our work to include the Canadian, European, and American organizations," said longtime board member Karl Eisenmenger. "Tom made sure that everyone could express their concerns and did not impose an American solution to a challenge," added Roy.

More recently, promoting publishing and printing in the DRC under Congolese leadership was a priority for Tom. He enthusiastically encouraged collaborative

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From Haiti to Quebec: How God's Love Changed a Girl's Life

By: Elise Tegegne

alnourished, ill, and untended, Fifi Schultz was living in Haiti with her birth dad when the director of a local mission organization brought her to an orphanage. "I was given a second chance," Fifi told me, as we sat in a coffee shop this summer. She was later adopted by American missionaries serving in Haiti. Though on the outside she was a baptized, church-going missionary kid, on the inside she felt alone, questioning who God was.

Everything changed at a retreat in the spring of 2024. Fifi recalled a pivotal moment writing down her past mistakes on a sheet of paper and pinning them to a cross. "Everybody was tearing up the entire time," she said. Fifi realized how much God loved her, how much her adoptive family loved her: "All through my whole life, I was never alone."

Soon after the retreat, Fifi's French teacher, SF Board Vice President Dr. Amy Lynelle, told her class about an opportunity to serve at Camp des Îles, a summer camp that engages children holistically: in both physical activity and biblical teaching.

Playing soccer and basketball with kids in a new country sounded fun at first, but when Fifi landed in Quebec she suffered from a stress-induced stomach ache. "I was a wreck." She felt unprepared to share the Gospel, give her testimony, or teach the Bible.

But the camp's co-director Jaël Kenney encouraged her. Fifi realized she could share the Gospel and felt at peace: "Once I did that, it actually felt really good." Interacting with the campers, she realized she had a gift for working with kids. One girl had trouble paying attention and one day started crying, so Fifi brought coloring pages to help her stay focused and calm. Fifi's past challenges have given her compassionate eyes for those who struggle. "I understand feeling...different,"



Credit: Fifi Schultz

she said. By the end of the session, the little girl gave Fifi a hug.

Another person Fifi impacted was a Haitian Quebecois woman who heard her testimony at a local church. It was the first time Fifi had ever shared the story of God's goodness throughout her life. Though the thought of speaking was nerve-wracking, Fifi felt God's deep peace as the Holy Spirit took over. After the service, the woman, who had also been adopted,

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Continued from page 6: He Kept His Eyes on Jesus

efforts toward the creation of the Oasis Media Center, a print- and bookshop in Kinshasa, which has already produced hundreds of books for training Christian leaders.

Over two decades of board service gave Tom a fabulous perspective. As an expert coach, instead of instructing, Tom asked questions to guide his mentees to a decision, solve a problem, or think about a situation in a new way. "Tom was a wise and kind mentor in ministry, relationships, and marriage," said former SF Board Member Lynn Lockwood. John Sauceda speaks for us all in saying that "Tom trusted me personally to do my work and provided behind the scenes support to press on. While he never micromanaged, he was aware and appreciative of my efforts."

Tom loved his wife Sue, four children, twenty grandchildren, and fifteen great-grandchildren, believing a strong family following biblical principles was central in representing Jesus to the world. Tom and Sue made it their mission to invest in couples seeking marriage mentorship. Tom treated the SF team like family, too. A father to us all, he cared about our loved ones, circumstances, and challenges. Tom and Sue hosted a BLF board meeting at their church in Oostburg, WI, coordinating a meeting space, all the meals, and filling their home with board members and guests. "Tom's smile said, 'I've never met a

When the sun goes below the horizon, he is not set, the heavens glow for a full hour after his departure. And when a great and good man sets, the sky of this world is luminous long after he is out of sight. Such a man cannot die out of this world. When he goes, he leaves behind him much of himself. Being dead, he speaks.

- Beecher, Streams in the Desert

stranger!' I'll never get over his smile," said Sauceda. "When that smile came out, you knew you were in a good place!"

Tom prioritized and served in his local church, undergirding his several leadership and counseling ministries with prayer because he wanted to serve Jesus well. Although officially "retired," he never retired from serving God—a splendid example of faithfulness to the end.

Former Board Member Pam (Lisle) Smith shared that "Tom reminded me that putting in the hard work and keeping our eyes on Jesus, whether in our faith, family, relationships, ministry, or business, leads to a harvest."

Continued from page 7: From Haiti to Quebec

sought Fifi out to hear more of her story. It was an emotional encounter. "My story actually touched somebody," Fifi said.

In addition to touching the lives of others, Fifi saw the Lord touch her own life, too. At Camp des Îles, truths she had first understood at the retreat became more real to her. She realized her identity in Christ: a human being worthy of love, made in the imago dei, God's child and no one else's. She recalled Isaiah 43:1: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."

After a week of laughing, serving, and building relationships with the camp community, leaving was sad. But Fifi's life has been forever changed. "Ever since that trip, I've been focusing more on God's

love and understanding how He loves us so so so so much," Fifi said. Newly inspired to help kids, she initiated SF's "Gospel Camp for Kids" project and then returned to serve at Camp des Îles with SF this past July. Though Fifi had stubbornly refused the idea of becoming a missionary, her time in Quebec has made her reconsider. She's even envisioning opening her own orphanage. Fifi's time in Quebec also prepared her for a ten-month gap-year program of mission work in the US and overseas. "If Camp des Îles didn't happen, I don't

Doing what she'd never done before has given her courage. "Now...I'm comfortable sharing my story with people," Fifi says. Her final word of encouragement: "Just love."

"It's about Time You Go Back"

Taken from a recorded testimony of Sharee McMahon

grew up in a non-Christian home. My family went to church most of the time, but not those that preached the necessity of accepting the Lord as your Savior. I accepted the Lord in 1981 at a Christian Women's Club luncheon, to which a co-worker had invited me. And why did I go? Because it was at a lovely country club. I had two very young children at the time, and they had childcare. I went about seven or eight times to those luncheons. They met once a month, and the Holy Spirit kept working on my heart through the speakers. It wasn't the first time I went that I realized my need for the Lord. It was seven or eight times. That is so often true

My husband Ron accepted the Lord in 1982. We were baptized together and got involved in a fine Bible believing church [pastored by David Jeremiah]. We were there for 21 years in San Diego, and then we moved to Boise, Idaho, in 2008.

with unbelievers...

and that was the

case with me.

I've been involved in a lot of ministries, and right now I'm very involved in GriefShare because I've been widowed for six years. But my passion has been missions ever since we started going on mission trips back in 1999 to Alaska, and then nine times to Belgium and France with BLF. But I haven't been since 2011, my last trip out of the country, which was to France.

So now I want to bring you to 2025. On Christmas, my whole family was with me because I had had a hip replacement two days before. My son said, "Mom,

would you ever consider going back to France on a mission trip?"

I said, "No." Immediately.

He said, "Why not?"

I said, "Because those years of serving the Lord with your dad in France and Belgium were the best of our lives, and I couldn't go back there. It would be too

> emotional..." End of conversation.

> > Then about six weeks later in early February, [SF Executive Director

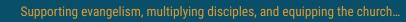
Angela [Brandle] reached out to me and said.

"Your name keeps coming up, and would you be interested in going on this mission trip to France?" I called her and I said, "Tell me about it." So already I can see how the Holy Spirit had been working on my heart from Christmas time to early February. She told me about it, and I realized that I wouldn't be

going to the same location, nor working with the same people, except for Nathan and Annie (whom I love), and that

would be a whole new experience for me.

So I said, "Let me pray about it." I did. The Lord didn't give me any reason not to go. In fact, He told me, "Sharee, you are not getting any younger. You better go before it's just too late." It used to be so easy to put things off and say, "Oh, maybe next year I'll go." But I'm at the point in my life where I can't say that anymore. So here I am with the Lord's leading and urging and the Holy Spirit's leading me to go on this mission trip. I think if my husband Ron were here today, he would say, "It's about time you go back."



FOURTEEN DAYS ONE SUMMER: TAKING A TRIP TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

By: Angela Brandle

Two days on two planes and two train rides through the French countryside brought nine members of a multigenerational team to Montélimar, southeastern France, for SF's second Impressions trip to

serve in France's only evangelical Christian print shop run by our partner IMÉAF.

We stayed again in the historical manseturned-guesthouse in the mediaeval village of Le-Poët-Laval, home of the Protestant Museum that tells the story of the Huguenots' 17th-century persecution.

Driving to work through picturesque stone villages or walking in the blooming lavender fields gave a respite in God's beautiful creation, despite our busy days.

"This was one of the most mature teams I have led," said SF Executive Director Angela Brandle of the working or retired professionals whose varied gifts combined to make a strong, collaborative team. Sharee McMahon (see "It's about Time You Go Back," p. 9) and Marie Martinson, who had fed and cared for BLF teams in Marpent years ago, warmly provided delicious food for the team and our guests. Marie used her artistic skills to prepare bags of our gifts for the whole IMÉAF team and others who served us, including 3-D printed cicadas by Josiah Walkup, the creator of last year's frogs and octopi that appeared in unexpected places. All used their skills or testimony to minister to groups from young children to seniors. Karin Wilcox and Christelle Panumpabi shared beautiful music.

We assembled thousands of books and prepared mailings and shipments. Two team members on their second trip, Karin and Josiah, slipped easily into leadership roles. Lynn Lockwood was our tireless interpreter and repository of local French knowledge, having been a missionary in the region for eight years. Kevin Martinson and Elizabeth Landucci assured shinkwrap precision and assembled a huge mailing.

The two churches who received us last year eagerly offered opportunities to deepen fellowship. All team members led a devotional and shared testimonies in meetings, homes, or one-on-one. We joined the Evangelical Methodist Church for their annual church cleaning day, "making spiders homeless," joked Josiah. Two church families hosted us for dinner, a leisurely



event in France that lasted most of the evening. A couple hosted a church picnic at their beautiful country house with wooded lawns they bought to host ministry retreats. A smaller country church regaled us with food and friendship during the mid-service break. Our cooks prepared food to share with IMÉAF staff, and Karin rounded off the event with her arrangement of "Give Me Jesus" and "It is Well with My Soul" sung on the shop floor amid quieted machines and tearful staff.

The songs' messages were fitting. Two days before the team set out, IMÉAF shared with Angela that financial challenges threatened to close their doors unless God did a miracle. Leaders had just told staff they could all lose their jobs. The print shop manager has worked there since his school vacations at age ten. At our first team meeting, Angela shared that God had brought us into a delicate situation of painful emotions. Our team responded with care and sensitivity, taking time to pray together for IMÉAF's future when waiting for a machine to calibrate or a new print run to begin. Angela's specialized training in French and experience setting up an association in France years ago came flooding back as she assisted IMÉAF leaders with a grant request to a US foundation. IMÉAF is approaching other sources of funding to raise over \$100,000 by the end of the year. You can influence the outcome from your kitchen table by praying with us for God to touch the hearts of foundations and potential donors to save this valuable ministry.

We thank FIT members for giving 14 days of their summer to respond to God's leading and bring help and encouragement "for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14). If you are interested in serving on a team with SF, please contact **Angela.Brandle@synergiefr.org**.

SF INTERN AT CAMP

By: Elise Tegegne

Growing up as a missionary kid in Niger, Laurey witnessed her parents faithfully serving the Lord. Now a junior at Iowa State University, Laurey Johnson is continuing in their footsteps. Over the past summer, she served as an intern with SF at Camp des Îles, a ministry that teaches the Gospel to children in Quebec, Canada, a region known for its antagonistic stance towards Christianity.

At four different camps spanning June 30th-August 1st, Laurey served both children seeking to grow in their faith and those unfamiliar with the Bible, like teens "Canoe" and "Bowser." These Muslim brothers heard about camp through a Christian family who had been witnessing to them for years. Over 15-hour days, Laurey supervised and discipled teen Leaders in Training, completed administrative work, spruced up the camp's pool area and gardens, served as a counselor, and translated the English chapel messages into French, among many other things. Laurey especially loved translating small group sessions, facilitating "amazing" conversations about the Bible. Laurey wrote, "The girls were hungry for truth and enjoyed talking about heaven, moral dilemmas, and what sin really is."

Despite a minor concussion the third week of camp, Laurey was able to continue into the fourth week, when chapel speakers from CEF of Québec engaged the children with a space-themed curriculum to illustrate the grandeur of God. "The kids were really engaged... and asked great questions about God and his ability to



Credit: Laurey Johsoi

create the universe." That week, SF's first Illuminate Quebec (IQ) team arrived, sharing testimonies at local churches and encouraging the camp's staff with their fresh energy and passion for the francophone world, love of the French language, and heart for Jesus. During the final week of camp, another IQ team, the Ivanco family, arrived. Andrej led the teen boy workers, while his wife Ligia served as a counselor.

Each person's service made a difference. Laurey wrote, "Doing the background work at camp, it can be hard to see how God is at work. But when we lift our eyes to God, when we see how He has arranged the heavens and the galaxies, we can only marvel at how He could use a small, insignificant planet to display the greatest love the universe has ever known. Like a solar system, each piece must do its part so that the whole can be a witness to God's work...By counselors, support staff, and administrators doing their work faithfully, God has shown the children and myself the beauty of the Gospel."





SF's 2025 IQ teams. Credit: Dr. Amy Lynelle (left) and Andrej and Ligia Ivanco and family (right)



WAYS TO SERVE GOD WITH SYNERGIE FRANCOPHONE

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Ambassadors in the US to advocate for those without God's Word. Full or part time. To explore these opportunities, contact **Angela.Brandle@synergiefr.org**.

MISSION 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.



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