

News and Current Events :: Why Churches Worship Illegally—In Paris

Why Churches Worship Illegally—In Paris - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2012/10/10 2:58

As more than 100 Haitian evangelicals danced and sang on Easter Sunday, the floor caved in at their makeshift church north of Paris. The deaths of a 6-year-old girl and 47-year-old woman who fell through the second story of the rented house in Stains were a tragic sign that Christian gatherings have outgrown available space in the secular French capital.

"Many immigrants that come from French islands and territories are fervent in their religious expression," said Gilbert Bilezikian, a pastor and former Wheaton College professor born and educated in France. "cannot gather without making a lot of noise, so it is difficult to find places to meet."

Of the nation's 1.6 million Protestants, 460,000 now identify as evangelicals amid heavy immigration from Francophone nations. Last year, their churches nearly tripled from 769 to 2,068, according to the French National Council of Evangelical Churches (CNEF).

However, cash-strapped congregations—immigrant or otherwise—are having difficulty finding worship space that meets safety standards.

"Space is a very hard thing to find over here, and is very expensive," said Lorenzo Monge, founder and lead pastor of the Église de la Brie, a young church just east of Paris.

Thus many churches "outlaw themselves" by illegally worshiping in unsafe buildings, says Christian Willi, publisher of French magazine Christianity Today (unrelated to CT). "This is a real problem."

The problem lies in poor relationships with local authorities, according to CNEF. "Free exercise of religion... is hampered if evangelical communities do not have access to suitable premises," states the group.

Meanwhile, many historic chapels with soaring steeples and gothic architecture are being demolished for lack of attendance amid rising upkeep and restoration costs.

Some historic churches rent their space. But the available time slots are no longer sufficient. Willi mentions a legislative proposal that churches be given special long-term leases in order to purchase property cheaply and pay its full value off over time.

CNEF, which represents approximately 75 percent of France's evangelicals, hopes to rectify the situation by promoting dialogue between churches and local authorities.

One case study: Monge, who took a part-time job with an IT company in order to connect with local leaders. "We have a very good relationship with all of the mayors around."

After meeting for 18 months in places ranging from a Catholic presbytery to a city reception hall, the Église de la Brie recently succeeded in buying a warehouse to host services for its 140 congregants.

from: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/october/paris-problem.html>

Re: Why Churches Worship Illegally—In Paris - posted by enid, on: 2012/10/10 3:02

Interesting...

What more can be said? Or should I ask?

Re: - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2012/10/10 11:22

Enid, you are closer to Paris then those of us on this side of the pond. What are you thinking?