

Binche Bulletin February 2024

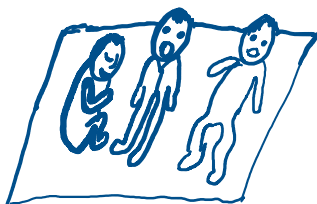
Dear friends,

Many people in Binche would say that the highlight of 2024 is already over, but we have a different perspective. Last week was the carnival and although we did attend this year as we had friends visiting, we still (after 20 years!) fail to understand the ecstatic thrill some of our friends obviously get from the event!



Apart from watching “baby spam” videos of our grandchildren (of which more later), our thrill for the moment, which others probably find equally incomprehensible, is watching two red squirrels who regularly visit our garden. We get very excited and try to catch them on film, albeit with mixed success. Our location on the edge of town is perfect as we have easy access to the town and station as well as plenty of fields country lanes and muddy paths to explore on our tandem.

We continue with our ministry in Binche church. Thank you for praying for our Christmas event! A new location (in a spacious Catholic chapel) worked well and over 70 of us gathered to sing, hear the gospel and eat the local Christmas specialty, “Cognol”. The choir was particularly appreciated and the choir visits to friends during the week before Christmas were much appreciated. Sadly, Frances went down with a nasty lurgy just after the big church event so was not able to attend any of the home visits. In most cases she was the link person, so this was slightly strange for everyone involved but, as they say: no one is indispensable!



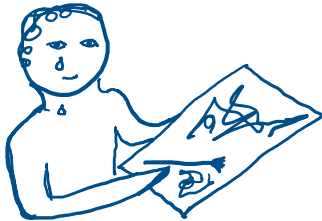
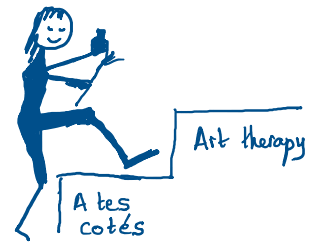
She was very thankful that her illness came after her UK trip when amongst others she visited new foster grandchild Sofia and new grandchild Juliette. Naomi our third newborn was still hiding at this stage, so we all had to wait until Christmas to meet her... What an exciting two months for our family! We are delighted to report that all three babies are doing well though their parents and sisters have had several colds and infections.

On the 29th December we met for the first time as a family of fourteen. Plans to eat Christmas dinner in a parish hall near Andover went without a hitch and despite being only a week old, Naomi was as big as her cousins and as well behaved!



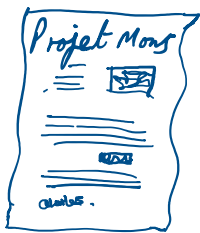
In November We asked you to pray for some complex pastoral issues and these have only increased in the intervening period so please continue. The victory is assured but for now, the battles continue to rage.

Frances has been part of a regional support group called “à tes côtés” (along side you) since September and has now been invited to train as a leader for future groups. We are not entirely sure this is the direction she will take but a couple of days of training seem like a logical next step. So far it has been good to share in this ministry and to see members of several churches in the region finding new stability and peace through the small group therapy. One member of Binche church is meanwhile attending a men's group in the same organisation and he too has found real healing through the meetings which is very encouraging. So



many members of churches struggle with so much heartache and trauma and so this ministry where they have the possibility of facing their pain and learning how to manage the consequences, brings much release. Please pray for wisdom as we plan future projects. A visitor yesterday asked if Frances would do art therapy sessions in a local home for aged people with mental health issues. This too might be a good next step.

Charles meanwhile has moved into some new leadership roles. He is on the leadership committee for InterAction, youth camps we have been attending for the last ten years. He is also on the managing committee for Le Bon Livre (the book ministry previously part of Vianova - BEM.) He also shares in the direction of the regional Pastors group though he has managed to hand on the treasurer's role. 😊 Committee meetings are not really a source of joy for him so please pray that he may be effective and wise in his contributions!



We continue to ask you to pray about our future and that of the Binche church. Charles has now written a proposal to inspire a new collaborative church plant in the nearby town of Mons. We will be discussing this with our reference council and then the “Association” churches leadership (FIEC type) in the next few months so please pray for God's leading.

We are still enjoying the company of our Ukrainian guests Katya and Mâcha. Please pray that we will continue to show the love of God as we share life with them. Most of the time, the arrangement is a blessing for us all, but those of you who have ever shared a home with a kitchen, a fridge, a washing machine, and a shower, will understand that sometimes the tension mounts and we're given “a growth opportunity”! Praise the Lord for this fun source of sanctification...



One of our aims in the church here in Binche for 2024 is to be a better at supporting missionaries which has helped us realise what heroes you are! Many, many thanks for your perseverance and commitment to us over many years! We certainly do not take your faithfulness for granted!

*Much love
Charles & Frances.*

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