

March 2025, Michael & Rani Grivas-Allison



Michael and Rani Grivas-Allison

with Alexi (2)

Serving the Lord in Belgium



Dear Friends,

As of the end of this month, it will have been two years since you sent us to Belgium! 🇧🇪

Throughout this time, we have had such a real sense of **your solidarity** with us in wanting to see **a world that knows Jesus** and **your commitment** to us being here long-term. We give thanks to God for your heart for His global Kingdom, so evident to us in your generous giving, faithful prayers and kind care for our family. Thank you! 🙏

As we give thanks to God, below we've shared **a longer reflection on these first two years of learning language and culture**. We've also shared a little about our **hopes and plans for this third year to come**, for your prayers.

Yours in joyful partnership,

Michael & Rani

2 years in Belgium: A slowly opening door... 🚪

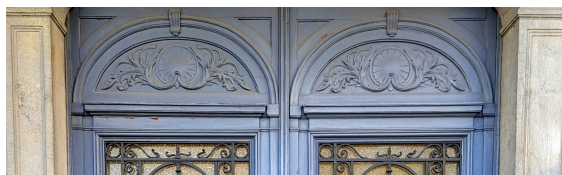


There are lots of great doors in Brussels. Usually big and heavy, sometimes ornate and colourful, and always closed and impenetrable against the cold and rain. As we notice them, we're often reminded of how different this makes the city visually when compared to Australia's front gardens, verandahs and balconies...which almost seem to extend out to passers-by to invite them in!

We enjoy picking out our favourites and snapping the occasional picture. In our more cynical moments, the doors of this city can feel like a bleak reminder of **how hard it can be to 'access' language and culture as foreigners.** However as time has gone on, they've also become a strong visual reminder for us to trust our Heavenly Father, who **opens doors for His Gospel (Col 4:3)** and who **'opens wide' the door to rich fellowship with Himself through Jesus Christ (John 14:2-3).**

A long awaited opening...

After two years of learning language and culture in Belgium, we're thankful that the door now seems to be



opening ... and (to push the metaphor a little further) we're maybe even at the stage of taking off our coats and shoes in the foyer before being offered an apertif!

To be honest, **we would have liked to reach this point much earlier** in our time here. However, we now realise that not only were our initial expectations too high; **we also hadn't factored in the particular pace** at which things seem to open up in Belgium...



The door of language and culture...



First, there is the slowness of learning the language itself which, even after two years of intensive study, still regularly perplexes us with its logic, grammar and sounds. A Belgian woman recently told us she thinks that the bar to reach functional French is quite high, but once you break-through, progress comes quickly. **There is also a certain relational slowness** - on the one hand a normal part of crossing-cultures. But also something that foreigners here seem to describe almost on-loop: a strong insider/outsider culture, where polite distance-keeping gives way to warmth and hospitality, once you've found your way 'in'.

Walking through the door...

All this has often left us wondering where we should set our expectations in this first term of service. We've asked, 'do we need to knock harder?', 'what should we realistically aim for?' and 'how do our goals need to be shaped by the context we're in?'

Yet at the two year mark, we can see clear evidence of how far God has 'opened the door' since we arrived.

For example, in just this last month...

...we went to a birthday party for one of Alexi's classmates and **didn't worry about whether we could hold a conversation...**

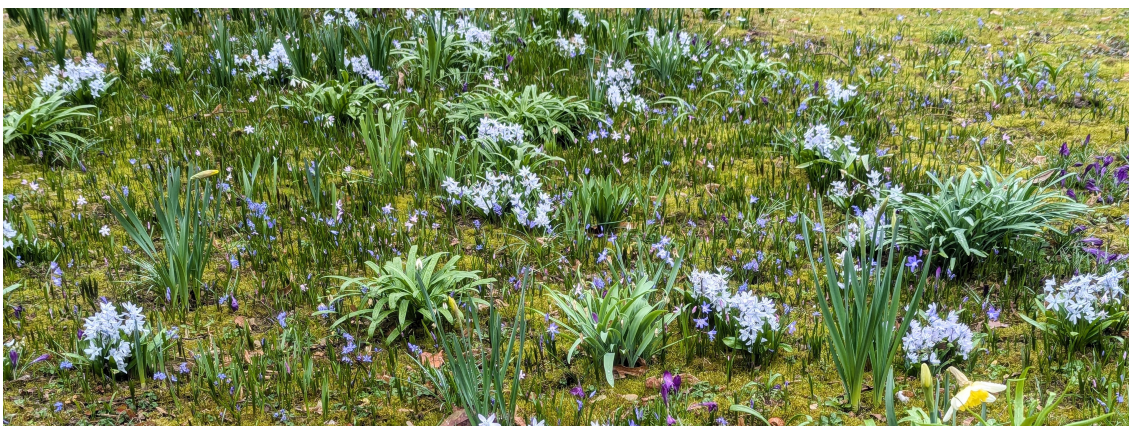
...Rani went to a **women's conference** with a group from church, and came back (after 12 hours of non-stop chatting and listening in French) **tired but energised...**

...our most recent presentations at language school have **felt close in style and level** to the kind of talks we can imagine giving at GBU...

...church has felt like **listening to God speak through His word** and not just trying-to-understand what the preacher/service leader is saying (it's hard to convey how precious this has been!!)...



Give thanks with us that God continues to 'open the door' to life and relationships in Belgium 🙏 Please pray with us that in this next year, He would open the door wider, help us to move at the pace that He has ordained for us, shape us to be useful and winsome in this context, and keep our hearts trained on the reason we are here.





The year ahead...

During our recent CMS pastoral visit, we were reminded of **the goals of our first term on location**: to learn **language and culture**, build **good relationships** with our local partner (GBU Belgium) and **work out what our next term will look like**.

As we launch in to our third year in Belgium before a home-assignment sometime around mid-2026, these are **the big 'goals' we have set in conversation with the GBU, CMS and each other**:

Finish full-time language study

Begin serving with **GBU Brussels**

Work out **the location for our second term** (either Brussels or another city)

Embrace church life as much as we can

Start doing **regular hospitality in French**

We would greatly value your prayers as we work towards these under God.

Upcoming dates...

- **Alexi's birthday (3 yrs)** (8 April)
- **Exams** (10-15 April)
- **Short family holiday** (29 April - 2 May)
- **Final full-time French level** (12 May - 4 July)

Please thank God...

- For the **rich welcome He has given us in Christ**
- For the **steadfast and generous support of gospel partners** in Australia (you!) and Belgium
- **For two years in Belgium!**

Please ask God...

- For a **long and fruitful season** of serving Him in Belgium.

- For progress in our French studies and 'breaking into' French-speaking relationships in the next 3 months.
- For university students in Belgium to know Jesus and make Him known.

From Michael and Rani

Say 'hello' or let us know you've prayed for us!



*"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me."
Revelation 3:20*

Financial Partnership

We can't serve in Belgium without the generosity of God's people.

If you'd like to give through financial support, please head to our [CMS giving page](#).

If you would prefer to give using a BSB and account number, please email CMS and they will send you the relevant details.

We're so thankful for your partnership with us to see a world that knows Jesus!

CMS is a fellowship of Christian people and churches committed to global mission. We work together to set apart long-term workers who cross cultures to share the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our vision is for a world that knows Jesus. We aim to do this by: reaching gospel-poor peoples for Christ, equipping Christian leaders for church and society, and engaging churches in cross-cultural mission.

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