

# NEWSLETTER



Spring 2024

Dear friends and supporters of Les Amis,

It is amazing to think that this is our 34<sup>th</sup> newsletter since Les Amis started in 2007. Looking back over previous newsletters (many of which are on our website ([www.les-amis-bf.org.uk](http://www.les-amis-bf.org.uk) then Newsletters), we are so very grateful to you for the thousands of lives which have been touched by your generosity. As things stand now, some of the recent news coming from Burkina Faso has been sad to read. There was an attack on a mosque which resulted in dozens of people being shot dead. Later that day a further 15 worshippers were killed during a Mass in a Catholic church. Then, in a separate attack, 170 people including women and children, were executed in the north of the country. Humanitarian workers say that Burkina

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Faso is one of the world's most neglected crises resulting in more than two million people being forced from their homes, and a quarter of all children under five having stunted growth resulting from hunger. French and other European agencies have now left Burkina Faso and other sub-Saharan countries, to be replaced by Russian alliances. Aljazeera remains an excellent source of news about events in Burkina Faso. (<https://www.aljazeera.com/where/burkina-faso/>)

Although Gillie clearly cannot visit Burkina Faso for the moment, we remain hopeful that the situation will change for the better one day. In the meantime, despite the problems of terrorism, our projects power ahead, changing the lives of many suffering poor.

## THE YOANN FOUNDATION IN OUAGADOUGOU

*This was where all our work began. Named after the late Yoann, a sufferer of cerebral palsy, this foundation serves the needs of disabled children, their mothers and other women in real need.*

**Dianne (right)** has two children, aged 10 and seven. After the death of her husband, she suffered a lot at the hands of her brother-in-law, who one day chased her and the two children out into the streets. They found refuge in the house of her sister-in-law. Even there, she was threatened with expulsion from their house. Thankfully, that did not come to pass. Apart from helping the children to go to school we helped Dianne to start a small business of selling dresses and other items for women and children on her bicycle. With this she has been able to put some food on the table. In short, your support of women and children in distress is of crucial importance.



## REACHING OUT TO REFUGEES AND INDIVIDUALS

*We love to give financial help directly to individuals whose situations in life are really difficult. The help we give to them is genuinely life-changing. We also love being able to help, in a very direct way, those who are fleeing from trouble spots in search of safety and help.*



Many years ago, whilst staying in the remote village of Salembaoré, Gillie had the pleasure of visiting another small village, not far from there. She was interested because it was the family home of Father Vincent de Paul Tarama, whom we had first met years ago, when he was a young seminarian studying in Ouagadougou. It was a wonderful visit during which she met his parents (**left**), brothers, sisters and wider family. His father owned a nice plot of land (**right**) on



which he successfully grew vegetables. Over the years we have followed Fr Vincent's career from seminarian to priest, now working for the Bishop of Tenkodogo. Last year we became aware that his parents had had to flee their village. We asked him to tell us what happened.....

*"For almost a decade now, our beloved country, Burkina Faso, is facing the difficult problem of terrorism. Many places in Burkina Faso have been attacked by terrorists, who killed lots of innocent people. They steal food, cattle and means of transportation. This unfortunate reality will spread throughout the whole country, touching specifically villages and some areas where there is no military presence.*

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Almost a year ago my beautiful village was, like many other villages, attacked by terrorists. They kidnapped two men of the village (including one of my maternal uncles) and asked the rest to leave the village immediately if they did not want to be gunned down.



My parents (**left**), like many other people, were compelled to abandon the village in which they'd lived for so long, in order to save their lives. At that moment, it was difficult to find a means of leaving. My family managed to get to Ouargaye, about 12 kilometres away, by bicycle. They then found a bus going to Cinkansé, and then to Tenkodogo. They have lived in Tenkodogo since March 2023, where they are trying to settle.

It was a very difficult time for my parents to leave their village where they cultivated land. The most painful and difficult aspect of all is that they could not take with them any food, or any of their cattle, or anything which my father had grown on his land. They were allowed only a small bag! To that, we can add the social and psychological aspects that might be the greatest challenge. Because it is not easy to be forced to leave one's village where you have the basic necessities to live, to move to another place empty-handed, where they have to start from scratch, among strangers, a different environment, different place to live in, with the experience of internal displaced persons. This is the condition in which my parents fled from the danger of terrorism to settle in Tenkodogo."

When we heard what had happened to Father Vincent's family, we were very keen to help in whatever way he felt was useful. We therefore send some financial help to, at the very least, secure a home for them.

### **PROGRESSION TO FURTHER EDUCATION**

Part of our work is to ensure that those we have supported through secondary education (mostly orphans or youngsters from very poor backgrounds) are then offered the opportunity to progress further, into university or college education. It has been great to be part of their journey from helplessness to empowerment.



**Left** is Naeva, who is an orphan. She has studied very hard for some years now, supporting herself over the years by selling onions on the streets of Koupéla. She now works in a laboratory in Bobo Dioulasso. Les Amis has made this possible. We are very proud of her!

Yasmine (**right**) was orphaned some time ago. Thanks to the help she has received over the years, she is now qualified to assist in operating theatres.



### **FATHER PAUL AND FATHER LAMBERT**

Part of our work is to enable Fathers Paul and Lambert to reach out to lots of individuals.

#### **FATHER PAUL**



Previous newsletters have mentioned Agénor, a bright and talkative child who is very physically handicapped. His mother, who has sole care of him, was finding it hard to get about with him as he has to be carried everywhere. In our last newsletter we gave news that we would be buying her a motorcycle, and invited you to help us to do this. We are delighted to tell you that she has taken delivery of this precious help which will transform their lives (**left**).



Many of you were touched by Perrine's plight in the loss of her house due to bad weather, and the fact that, although the house has been made safe again, Perrine could not afford to buy beds. A big thank-you to those of our benefactors who made contributions towards replacement beds and mattresses. These were very recently delivered to Perrine and her family, who have received them (**above right**) with great gratitude. Thank you!

As Fr Paul mentioned in the last newsletter, he wanted to help two young brothers from a very disadvantaged background, to establish a poultry business. With the money they received from Les Amis, they renovated the chicken coop and ordered chicks (from Europe). The chicks arrived in January and are doing really well (**right**).



## FATHER LAMBERT



The women of St Luke's Training Centre, which had to move due to terrorism, have at last got back to the business of generating their own income with activities such as soap-making (**left**). They are so grateful to have received your support to help them,



following the move, to get started again. Another significant outlay is in providing school dinners (**above right**) for children of displaced families. Without lunch, there would be no staying at school for the

afternoon. Father Lambert has told us that he has run out of funds to keep this provision going for the rest of the school year which ends in June; we are hoping to be able to help him with this.

Father Lambert is very mindful of elderly women on their own, one of whom is Manette (**right**), whom we have often mentioned in our newsletters. She is still living in Tougouri; anyone travelling in that region must do so with a military convoy due to terrorist attacks and explosive devices. Despite this, he does his best to provide her with food and medicine. It is shocking to think that Fr Lambert, whom many Godalming parishioners will remember with warmth (his having spent time in Godalming on a number of occasions), is now in the thick of such danger every day.



## PROTECTING AND EDUCATING GIRLS .....

*The protection and education of girls and young women is really important to us. Burkina Faso is a country which favours males and gives few rights to females.*

### ... Baskouré

In our last newsletter we reported that Sister Léontine, who looks after the home for girls in Baskouré, was asking for extra funds to cover a number of items, such as replacement mattresses. We shared with you in our last newsletter a picture of the mattresses in a truly terrible condition. Thank you for having responded to her plea for the mattresses and other items which they needed. **Right** is a photo of all the girls with the piles of brand-new mattresses behind them.



**Below** is work being undertaken to repair parts of the girls' dormitory. Because of the extreme weather in that part of the world (heat in the dry season, and very heavy rain in the wet season), buildings fall into disrepair very easily.



*"I am often called upon for help, and I do my best to keep in touch with many, but am conscious that money is running low....."*  
Fr Lambert

Dear benefactors, we'd love to help Fr Lambert feed the children at school for the rest of this academic year; we'd love to be of continuing help to families forced to leave their land and therefore livelihoods. We'd love to ensure that nobody be turned away when asking for help!

## WE WOULD WELCOME OPPORTUNITIES TO GIVE MORE TALKS!

Gillie is looking forward to making an appeal in the parish of Cranleigh & Bramley later this year. Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to tell you about our work. Please do contact us if you would like Gillie to come and give a talk to whatever group you might belong to.



### ***A personal message from Gillie ...***

There seems to be such a lot of hatred in the world just now: hatred between peoples and nations, and much hatred expressed online often between complete strangers. Despite this, I am sure you join me in great gratitude for the love that we each have for so many people in our lives, and for the love they have for us.



I am deeply grateful for the brilliant and selfless people who run our projects for us, people who express that love on our behalf. All of them have given their lives to others out of love of God and their fellow human beings.

A big thank-you to: Father Paul and Father Lambert, who are our 'right-hand' men in Burkina Faso; Brother Harry and Pélagie in Ouagadougou (the Yoann Foundation); Sister Léontine (the home for girls in Baskouré); Sister Isabella (St Joseph's Training Centre in Fada N'Gourma), Sister Irène (the home for girls in Ziniaré), Father Gérard (OCADES in Koupéla), Father Pascal (supporting undergraduates), Father Thomas (St Monique home for orphans) and Father Vincent (Tenkodogo). I want to make a special mention of Father Charles who handles all the incoming money for forwarding to the various projects. I can see him now, in my mind's eye, sitting in a room in Koupéla in 2007, asking if we would consider helping the home for girls in Baskouré. I was with my friend and fellow Trustee, Jude, at the time. It took us less than a minute to say a big 'Yes!' He has been key to our success since the very start of our work. Yes, there is much hatred in the world, but I wouldn't mind betting that, in fact, there is far more love than we could imagine. Please help us to spread that love by continuing to support our work.

***Thank you everyone for helping us to help others!***

## Any changes to your circumstances that we should know about?

**Can you still Gift Aid?** If your circumstances have changed and you can no longer Gift Aid your donations, then please don't forget to let us know.

*giftaid it?*

Our continued and heartfelt thanks to **Headline Design & Print** ([www.helloheadline.com](http://www.helloheadline.com)) for printing this newsletter for us. They do a fantastic job, and we are really grateful to them.



*The Trustees of Les Amis-Burkina Faso: Gillie & David Nicholls and Jude O'Mara-Spicer*

### **Les Amis – Burkina Faso**

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The poor will never cease out of the land;  
therefore I command you to open wide your hand  
to the needy and to the poor. (Deuteronomy 15:11)

In so far as you did this to the least of those brothers of  
mine, you did it to me. (Matthew 25:40-41)

**100% of money given is passed on to the needy. Yes, 100%!**