

# 2022 Year in Review



## Tom Johnson - USA

### A glimpse at what your support made possible:

My ministry is to equip French-speaking (Francophones) church leaders with the biblical-based training they need to conduct and grow their ministry competency in partnership with the Coram Deo Association of Churches. Our approach is to work with candidates who are already active in local church ministry, but for whom traditional methods of pastoral preparation (such as seminaries and Bible schools) are unavailable to them because of cost, location, or their personal situation.

Because of your investment in RCA Global Mission and my cross-cultural ministry, Coram Deo can offer competency-based training at about one-tenth of the actual cost, since most of the expense is in my contact hours with the candidates as their study supervisor. As a result, we are working with men and women who have a clear and identifiable calling to serve the Lord, but who would otherwise have had few options to receive training to pursue that call.

We have several students who are middle-aged, immigrants from Congo, married with children, and working full-time jobs. These immigrants participate in churches where they conduct services in French and/or Congolese languages but, as leaders, they may not have much biblical or pastoral training. Leaving Congo—often after spending years in refugee camps—disrupted their young adult lives and their career and education goals. Because they did all their previous schooling in the French system, they assumed that since they now live in America, they wouldn't be able to study again in that language. They tell us that they've long known that God wanted them to become pastors and ministers but they thought those dreams would never come to fruition until they learned about the Coram Deo Francophone program!



*Left to right: Marie with the Coram Deo Francophone display, Tom preaching at the bilingual church in Ottumwa, IA, Tom speaking to the Francophone Church in Sioux City, IA.*

## Our challenges of 2022

I began this ministry in the last quarter of 2021 with no candidates and only one contact with a North American-based French-speaking church. Very few people were aware of the in-ministry model of pastor formation, in which one can receive training while actively engaged in ministry. Much of early 2022 was spent trying to identify possible leads that might be interested in our program. The Lord led us to the Congolese immigrant community, which can be found in many Midwestern communities with agro-processing industries, as such jobs require little English to perform. Since these immigrants are working full-time, getting adjusted to the U.S., and raising families, they have little time or money for obtaining ministry credentials.

It has been a challenge to explain the Coram Deo model of preparing church leaders for these immigrant churches and to get interested candidates to successfully start our new program, while they balance all of their other responsibilities. Yet, by the grace of God, we had 10 Congolese candidates begin their studies with us by December 2022.

Another difficulty I faced this year was managing our family dynamics, particularly since Aichatou relapsed in her struggle with mental health and was not in our home for 9 months of 2022. Additionally, our oldest daughter, Marie, graduated from high school and started college out-of-state, while Thekla transitioned from pre-school to kindergarten and the middle girls kept busy with church and school activities. Again, the Lord was merciful and answered our prayers for restoration, so that by the end of the year Aichatou was back on her medicines and part of our family life again.



*Worship at the International French Fellowship church in Cedar Rapids.*



## Please pray

- Pray for Coram Deo's Francophone pastoral training program and our current and future students. Many of our students suddenly face family, job, and health challenges shortly after beginning their studies. Pray for their spiritual protection and their encouragement in the face of obstacles.
- Pray that the Lord will lead us to new candidates for the Francophone program and that we will have around 20 students enrolled in 2023.
- Pray for our family, as we send Laurey to college in the fall and Aichatou receives monthly injections for her condition. Pray for the Lord's provisions and that we shall daily feel His hand upon our lives.