



March 2023

Dear Friends,

I hope that 2023 is going well with you. We've been experiencing a fairly mild, but long winter in Pella. Generally, everything is going fine with everyone healthy in our family. However, many of my French pastoral students have been dealing with various family challenges, such as a wife with eclampsia, a workplace back injury, four infected teeth to be pulled, and being in a coma for two days!

The winter and rising inflation have impacted the ministry in several surprising ways. Since most of my students have jobs and families, they've told me that rising prices, additional work hours, and other increased expenses during the past few months have made it difficult for them to find time for their studies and to pay their modest fees. Add in sickness and school activities, and the good progress that most made during the fall has drastically slowed down. This was a bit unexpected and I'm looking for ways that I can make the curriculum more user-friendly for busy students from oral cultures that are often too exhausted for heavy reading.

I'm currently preparing a curriculum for Bible Study that draws on the French-language videos from The Bible Project (www.bibleproject.com/francais). Since every potential pastor should be exposed to the major themes contained in each Bible book, using the Bible Project videos seems like a winning strategy to help my students gain an appreciation for the most important aspects of every book of the Bible through watching short videos. While The Bible Project does have some free online classes in English to help study the Bible, their French project hasn't yet launched any courses.

Additionally, I'm finishing up the curriculum for a course on Church Worship, Administration, and Sacraments. This will help students plan Sunday services, understand the purposes and administration of the sacraments, and learn some basics of church government and management. There's a lot that goes into leading a church and many are topics that are rarely 'taught', but more often 'caught' by doing them!

For our family, Laurey and Ellie are now in Hattiesburg, MS, on a youth group work trip through our church and World Renew and fixing up a house that had been hit by a hurricane in 2017. Both of these girls have been active with Large Group and Individual Speech contests this winter with One-Act Play, Musical Production, Group Mime, Storytelling, Improv, After Dinner Speaking, and Public Address among the categories they entered. Laurey went to All-State with the PCHS One-Act Play and Ellie went with After Dinner Speaking. Thekla, too, joined the theatrical world as a venus flytrap in "The Frog Prince." Next week, the two high schoolers perform in the spring play, "Clue", while Laurey also starts tennis! Laurey will graduate from Pella Christian this spring to wrap up her high school career and will attend Iowa State University where she will study Human Development.

Would you like to receive these updates digitally? Please email Kelli at kgilmore@rca.org to be added to the email list. You will receive more timely updates from the missionary you support and help us be good stewards of our resources.



*Left: Laurey and Ellie paint interior doors at Hattiesburg, MS for spring break mission trip.
Right: Thekla is a venus flytrap in the Missoula Children's Theater production of "The Frog Prince."*

Marie has 18 credits (mostly musical) this quarter at UNW-St. Paul and will join the UNW choir for their two-week performance tour of England in May.

PRAYER AND PRAISES

1. Thank you for your continued support and prayers for us and the ministry. Aichatou is getting a monthly injectable and it's keeping her engaged with life.
2. Pray for our existing French enrollees and for leads in attracting additional prospective students. Pray that the enemy will not succeed in distracting them from the ministry the Lord has called them to and the equipping they need to prepare.
3. Pray for creativity and enthusiasm as I put together new courses for the French program.

In Christ,
Tom and family