



October 2023

Dear Friends,

Fall is here and we have two daughters at university and two at home. Laurey started at Iowa State University where she is studying Human Development-Family Studies and is seriously thinking about adding a French minor or major. She is rooming with Eliza Beebout, the daughter of our colleagues in Niger. Marie continues at the University of Northwestern-St. Paul (MN), a Christian college, where she majors in music education. Ellie is a sophomore at Pella Christian High School, busy with the fall musical production of “Mary Poppins” and Thekla is a first grade at Lincoln Elementary. As you can imagine, it is much quieter in our home than before as many evenings just have Thekla and mom and dad!



Laurey started Iowa State University this fall. Her cousin from Niger, Naomi, is a PhD candidate in Human Development at ISU.

I’m meeting with my French pastoral students and adapting and writing curriculum for the future. As I’ve mentioned in previous letters, I discovered that our adult students do much better with audio and video materials than they did with lots of readings. Adult learners, in general, prefer to learn by watching and doing, and we now live in an age where audio-visual resources are easier to come by. This means that I need to get as much material as possible into those formats, while still maintaining quality. There is a surprising amount of relevant French Christian material on YouTube, but not all of it is useful for training pastors, as I’ve learned through my reviews.

One of the surprising discoveries I made while exploring videos for teaching Church Administration is the degree to which many Francophone churches begin with an APEST (Apostolic-Prophetic-Evangelistic-Shepherding-Teaching) approach to organizing for church ministry. This comes from Ephesians 4:11-13, in which Paul states that these five are the ministries Christ gave the church for equipping the saints and building up the body of believers. In contrast, in America, most churches would focus on their shepherding and their teaching ministries, which would largely be directed at existing members. Of course, many have missions and outreach activities, but they’re not always conceived within the APEST framework. Just to clarify, apostolic is thought of as extending the reach and authority of the church in new places (church plants or missions), prophetic is understood as applying God’s Word to the life of the church community, and evangelism is actively sharing the Good News with those around us. Western churches are often most comfortable with shepherding ministries, as teaching ministries outside of preaching barely existed 200 years ago (hence, the Sunday School movement of the 19th century). From an administrative standpoint, organizing the church to fulfill APEST ministries seems to be

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Tom with Congolese Pastor Joel at his ordination in Grand Rapids, MI.

both the most faithful and biblical approach, but it makes many uncomfortable and it adds some complexity to church organization.

To attract more French students, RCA Global Mission is creating a scholarship program to help make our pastoral studies more affordable. If your church is interested in learning more and [making a contribution](https://www.rca.org/give/french-and-spanish-student-tuition-program-coram-deo-assoc-of-churches/) (<https://www.rca.org/give/french-and-spanish-student-tuition-program-coram-deo-assoc-of-churches/>) , please use the link provided or you can contact Luis Ruiz at lruiz@rca.org. I know sometimes at the end of the fiscal year, churches may discover they have funds available for these kinds of if-raised projects.

PRAYERS AND PRAISES

1. Pray for Marie and Laurey in their college studies, for Ellie in high school, and for Thekla in elementary school. The older three are balancing school, activities, and part-time jobs.
2. We give thanks that Aichatou was able to transition from an injectable to an oral drug for her condition, although this was done for cost reasons and not necessarily because it was the best medical option.
3. Pray for God to lead more French students to apply to the program and for other ideas on how to increase awareness of this option for Francophone pastoral training.