



January 2024

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year 2024! We pray that this letter finds you in good health and well-rested after celebrating our Savior's birth and the holiday season. Marie and Laurey came home from their respective universities in St. Paul, MN, and Ames, IA, in mid-December and our family celebrated Christmas together and with the larger Johnson clan. The two older girls are on break until mid-January.

We're thankful for your faithfulness and support for the mission and ministry in 2023. I feel that the year was about sowing seeds as I have spent most of my time these past 12 months preparing the curriculum in French for the Coram Deo pastor training program. We have six students in the online/distance education program, although not all of them have been diligent in their studies. However, this has been enough to get a sense of our approach and to adapt the material to our students' realities.



My best student has been Teddy who was recently posted to Lubumbashi, Congo, for his employment, although he is from Kinshasa. He is a middle-aged businessman with a growing family who has many contacts in the U.S. and a history of church involvement and leadership. He had never formally studied the Bible or theology but was often taking on pastoral roles in ministry. A recent illness required him to go on medical leave while he obtained treatment. As he has felt better during recovery, he has been studying our course material and meeting with me weekly through Zoom for videoconferencing. Even though we don't require such frequent meetings, Teddy has preferred to share his responses in conversations with me over just sending in written answers. This allows for many fruitful exchanges and my Congolese students seem to prefer this form of interaction—it's much more like a master-apprentice format than a professor-student one.

Generally speaking, we enter 2024 in good health. Aichatou is continuing to improve on her medications and works two part-time jobs. Marie was accepted into UNW-St. Paul's School of Education after taking all the prerequisites, so she now begins the education coursework part of her Music Education program. Laurey added

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French as a secondary major to her program in Human Development-Family Studies at Iowa State and plays in one of ISU's concert bands. Ellie is a sophomore at Pella Christian and is busy with group speech contest activities with individual speech contests and spring play coming up in February and March. Thekla has finished a semester of gymnastics and will continue with it and first grade this spring.

PRAYERS AND PRAISES

1. We're thankful for God's goodness in 2023 as we work in faith and plant seeds for the future. After many "roller coaster years" in our family and ministry, 2023 was pretty normal by comparison.
2. Pray for new students for the French pastoral formation program.
3. We're grateful that Aichatou's medications aren't producing any difficult side effects and that she is doing so well on them.
4. Pray for all of the girls as they consider how to spend their summers in 2024.

In Christ,

Tom and family