



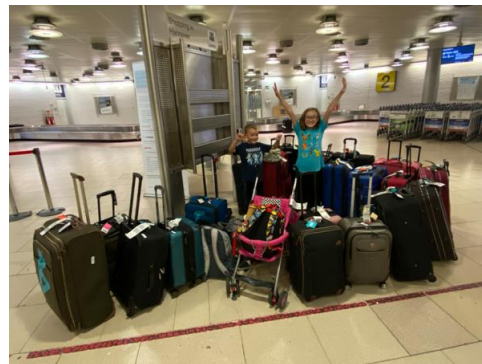
September 2024

Dear friends,

When Chelsea and I reflect over the last several months, it seems like a bit of a whirlwind! To label it as “a period of transition” would be a vast understatement. By God’s grace, we were able to conclude our time as pastors of Fairview Reformed Church in Fairview, IL, in a healthy and bittersweet way. While packing, holding garage sales, and saying goodbye to dear friends, we attempted to walk alongside our children as they prepared to let go of their home for the past five and a half years (really, the only home that they could remember!). The day after our last Sunday of preaching and leading worship and after a full few weeks of cleaning and packing, we shipped out on an itinerant journey throughout the Midwest.

Michigan. Iowa. South Dakota. Different homes, different churches, different places to drag in a few suitcases and lay our heads for a week or so. While that might sound exhausting (which it was, at times), it also allowed us to connect again with beloved family members and friends, as well as the chance to create new friendships and partnerships with congregations in each of those places.

We were given the chance to share the news about how God was calling us to glorify Jesus with a group of people in Germany who had been gathered in the city of Hannover from around the world (RELISH: the Reformed English Language International Service of Hannover). We talked with congregations and with individuals about how the vision wasn’t to grow a big church with a big budget, but rather to care for and disciple the families and individuals that God brought to Hannover—and then to send them back out to South Korea or Ghana or India after a few weeks, months, or years—however long their stay in Germany—to continue loving Jesus Christ and following him faithfully. By God’s grace, our ministry would make a global impact by investing in local and personal relationships.



Above left: Leaving Sioux Falls with all our bags! Happy Birthday, Lorelei! Above right: The kids celebrating at the Hannover airport that all our bags actually made it!

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Finally, we entered the latest phase of our whirlwind transition as we boarded a plane on August 5 (Lorelei's 11th birthday) and flew to Hannover! This, too, is a temporary stop as we will be heading back to the United States toward the end of September to continue fundraising, but it gives us a chance to begin leading worship and working on relationships with Christ's people in Hannover. This first couple of weeks have also been focused on transforming the apartment we inherited from Gretchen Schoon Tanis (the founding pastor of RELISH and fellow RCA missionary) into our own home—thanks in no small part to the many one-time gifts we received from generous and beloved friends throughout the world.



Above left: The kids making a fun home out of the IKEA boxes as we were putting them together and painting in our new apartment. Above right: Evander is already totally comfortable on the public transportation!

Each Sunday morning for the past few weeks, we've walked into churches that have historically housed ethnically German congregations, and we've seen something beautiful: people gathered together by the Holy Spirit from all around the world to worship the Lord with us. The South Korean pianist has just finished graduate school to become an orchestral conductor. Before worship, I speak with a Tanzanian theology student and a Ghanaian group of family and friends. We are invited to supper later in the week by people from Finland, the UK, India, and Germany. God has created a beautiful gathering of his people here—each with strengths and challenges, each with a first hello (thinking of the couple who worshiped with us for a single Sunday on their honeymoon), and with a final goodbye (thinking of the South Korean woman moving home after spending the better part of a decade worshiping with RELISH). God has brought each of these people together to join us for a season, to grow and to help others to grow in their faith in Jesus Christ, to create something beautiful that will last longer than any one person's involvement.

Even as we minister to these individuals from around the world, Chelsea, especially, is working to bless other local congregations as well. In her work with the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), Chelsea is supporting their work within the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC) region. Chelsea is working with executive committee staff to organize this year's General Assembly, an event held in the Cayman Islands in October, that will bring together leaders of various Reformed and Presbyterian denominations to worship and unite their visions of working for the glory of Jesus Christ as we pursue justice and mercy together.



The view from our WCRC office window - the church is the Marktkirche, the Lutheran Church at the very center of the Old Town.

RCA Global Mission does not receive denominational assessments or covenant shares. We depend on the faithful generosity of churches and individuals.



*Above left: Chelsea leading worship our very first Sunday with RELISH.
Above right: Jeff preaching on our very first Sunday with RELISH.*

In conclusion, we wish to say thank you for your continued prayers to our loving Father on our behalf, as well as for the continued support you provide. Many of you have joined us in praying that our daughter Lorelei would be able to make some good friends: after only our first Sunday here, she was invited to a birthday party for another young girl who embraced her and told her she was so glad to see her. God's faithfulness brought tears to our eyes. You can continue to support us in prayer in the following ways:

- For patience as we continue to navigate through the forests of German bureaucracy: bank accounts, work contracts, utilities, cell phones. Thank God for people like our friend Paul who have the knowledge and experience to help us through.
- For perseverance in language learning: we're learning we can get by without knowing much German, but we want to do more than "get by"—we want to thrive and be able to show God's love by helping others walk through language difficulties even as we have been helped.
- For a sense of contagious joy as we continue to make friends: we're so grateful that we've been invited to meet with several families over the next week. May the goodness of God take root within the heart of these new relationships with his people.



Lorelei and her new friend at the birthday party.

Thank you!
Jeff and Chelsea