



December 2025

2 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,

from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

4 And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.

And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.

5 And he shall be their peace.

---Michah 5:2, 4-5a



Dear Friends,

We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2026 from our family to yours! May Lord Jesus, who was born in Bethlehem so long ago, be your peace today and forever!

So much has happened to us in 2025. While the big news is that our second daughter, Laurey, became engaged to Ian and they are planning a July 2025 wedding, equally big news is the sudden interest and growth in my French pastoral studies program with Coram Deo.

In the past two months, I have received 15 applications from overseas candidates (all affiliated with RCA churches/partners) with another three likely to come from Young Life staff in West Africa. It's been four years since I started this online training ministry through the Coram Deo framework, and it's only in the past few months that others have taken notice of what we're offering. This comes at the most ideal time, and managing this large number will keep my days quite full. As Scripture teaches, the Lord's time is always best.

The largest group of commissioned pastor candidates is associated with the Evangelical Orthodox Church of Congo and several Canadian RCA churches. These candidates are already serving as pastors, despite their lack of training. They live in a conflict zone around Bukavu, Congo, where it has been very difficult for them to organize training or even for formal Bible schools to function. We will attempt to deliver our content through the WhatsApp software, which allows audio, video, and file sharing, as well as communications. There's still a question of whether their internet is robust enough and whether these pastors can get access to computers for their studies, as it is difficult to deliver entire interactive courses (with reading and written responses) through cellphones. So, we still need to work out some of the details before beginning.

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.

Besides Laurey's wedding, 2026 should see Marie graduating from UNW-St. Paul with a degree in Music Education, and Ellie graduating from Pella Christian High School, both in the spring. Both girls will spend part of spring 2026 in Europe with Ellie participating in a three-week student exchange in the Netherlands (we hosted Noa, from Overijssel in October) and Marie doing a six-week international student teaching placement at a Christian school in Hungary. While Ellie is likely to start at Iowa State University (ISU) in the fall, studying Hospitality and Event Management, Marie is uncertain at this moment where God may lead her after she graduates in May 2026. Laurey and her husband are planning on moving into a home and finishing up their respective bachelor's degrees at ISU for the 26-27 academic year. Thekla is enjoying her new school, Pella Christian Grade School.



Above left: Tom and Laurey attend Ellie's performance of "The Sound of Music". Ellie was Sister Berthe in the 7th straight year of Johnson girls performing in the PCHS fall musicals. Above right: Marie (pictured with her violinist roommate) completed her vocal recital requirement for her Music Education degree. Next semester is student teaching!

PRAYER AND PRAISES

1. We thank God for the multitude of pastoral studies candidates! Now we need prayer to help them onboard and to navigate a difficult technological reality of providing courses to African pastors, currently without computers and only having phone internet in a recent war zone! Pray for God to work out these and other details!
2. We're thankful for Laurey and Ian's engagement, and we lift them up in prayer, while we ask for the Lord's guidance in planning for their July 2026 wedding.
3. Pray for safe travels as the older girls come home for the holidays, with two international trips scheduled for spring 2026.
4. We ask the Lord to provide for the new French pastoral candidates' training costs and for my ministry support. I have less than 2/3 of my needed support going into 2026, as many supporting churches have reduced their giving post-COVID, while others have changed their mission priorities. Please let me know if you are aware of potential individual or church partners for this growing ministry.

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