



Thomas Johnson

A glimpse at what your support made possible:

My ministry is a story of faithfulness: both from God and from supporting churches, who have believed in my call to serve the Francophone church in places such as Niger, Haiti, the U.S. immigrant community, and now in Congo for 25 years. Since 2021, I've been working to develop an internet-based pastoral training program for French-speaking Christian leaders that is modeled after Coram Deo's competency-based program in English. I've felt that this was something that God wanted me to do, even though it was very uncertain as to who might be interested and would want to enroll. After getting most of the coursework adapted, translated, and/or created from scratch and finding a dozen or so interested candidates (mostly Congolese immigrants in the U.S.), interest suddenly grew in this effort.

In 2025, we began having conversations with church and ministry partners who were working with French-speaking Christians and church plants that were asking for leadership formation. They were looking for programs that could be delivered anywhere and would appeal to people who are already employed, actively engaged in ministry, and had few resources for residential instruction or costly tuition. This included RCA churches who were beginning to partner with the Congolese congregations that were in their communities—including some Congolese churches that were interested in joining the RCA, but whose pastors would need specialized training to qualify to become a commissioned pastor in the denomination.

Three of the Congolese candidates that were recommended to us are in West Michigan. Two work in factories and the third has an international job that involves lots of travel. In all three cases, these individuals provide crucial leadership in their immigrant church communities, but none had much previous formal training to become pastors. Several of the candidates are thankful that they can study at their own pace and in the language that they are most comfortable in because otherwise, they probably would have never bothered to get credentialed.

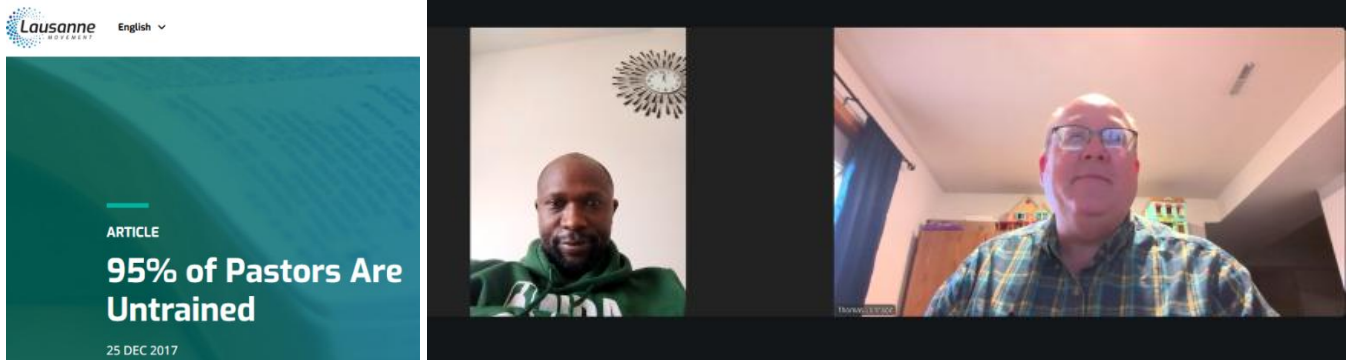


Left: Pastor Christophe leads an immigrant church in Iowa, but has never studied theology. Right: Benjamin leads a church in Congo.



The other surprising development has come from a group of Canadian churches that have had a partnership with Congolese churches in war-torn Bukavu, Congo. Since the conflict started in that part of Congo, the church has been growing, but it has been almost impossible to train pastors due to instability. When the Canadian pastors learned that RCA Global Mission has a missionary who can deliver content online to the French-speaking Congolese, they reached out to Coram Deo and we've begun making plans to train another 12-15 Congolese pastors, who could one-day join the denomination and would lead RCA churches in the Congo.

These stories are a result of faithful churches supporting an RCA missionary who remains faithful to God's calling upon his life to advance his Kingdom in the French-speaking world.



Above left to right: According to the Lausanne Movement, over 90 percent of pastors globally are not trained; A Zoom mentoring call with a pastoral candidate

Challenges of 2025

At the beginning of the year, our biggest challenge was in getting the French pastoral training program better known among the immigrant community and other ministries that work in the Francophone world. Our student numbers were low in comparison to what we were capable of serving. We asked our supporting churches to pray for the word to get out and for God to open doors, and he has done that. In fact, we have had inquiries from ministries that work in Congo, Niger, and Burkina Faso reach out to us about providing training for Christian leaders in those countries. While we were expecting to have more French-speaking North American immigrant church leaders express interest, we realized that God had other plans. Instead, he has used partnerships with international ministries to help us identify candidates for our programs, and also their financial commitment to pay for many of the associated training costs.

For the Congolese pastors in Bukavu, we realized that their circumstances made internet-based instruction problematic and that we needed to overcome the most likely issues before we could deliver course content. For example, their internet is mobile phone-based and very spotty connectivity. As a result, we have asked the Canadian sponsoring churches if they could commit to a Starlink satellite internet package for Bukavu. We've also learned that many of the pastoral candidates don't have computers and some don't even have cell phones, which makes it nearly impossible for them to access the coursework and complete assignments. Also, if we are to teach cohorts of four to six students (our preferred method), it would be good to have a larger screen Smart TV on site in Bukavu to make that possible. We've communicated these needs and we believe that these items can be supplied to Bukavu in 2026.

Because the Congolese in Bukavu are impatient to start their pastoral formation, I decided to develop a simple course using The Bible Project video series, "How to read the Bible" as a means to start the training and to better understand the learning and technical challenges these candidates will have before we implement the full 10 competency pastoral training program.

Please Pray

1. Please pray for the logistics involved in starting the pastoral formation in Bukavu, Congo. There are technical, equipment and financial issues that need to be addressed and resolved in order to successfully offer sustained pastoral on-line training in French.
2. Pray that the Lord provide sponsors to cover the majority of the training costs for our pastoral candidates. Not only does the Coram Deo program assign fees, but sometimes students also have other expenses to pay for in order to take the course.
3. Please pray for my missionary support. After 25 years as an RCA missionary, my skill set and effectiveness are solid, but I've lost support in the past five years from churches due to COVID-related declines and their leaving the denomination. I'm well-positioned to impact many for the Kingdom, but declining support could move me to half-time ministry in late 2026.