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Dear Prayer Partners,

3 May 2024

The other day we received a note from a supporting church inquiring whether or not they'd missed our April letter. No, I replied, we've been so busy in the last two months that it's been difficult to keep up with everything. But now that we've turned the page into May, I must make this letter our priority before the weekend!

So why the hectic schedule since our last "Bridges"? We've had more one-off special events and teaching responsibilities than usual. In late March it was the trip to Luxembourg for the class on eschatology. A few days later in early April, a one-week course on church history for our Luxembourgish BTCP guests followed, plus several days of entertaining guests before and after.



There've been more preaching and teaching responsibilities as well, plus the regular Spanish classes and hospitality, and completion of an evangelistic video presentation for a member of the church. Not to mention the banana peel! More on that in a minute.

**DISCIPLING LEADERS FOR LUXEMBOURG IN APRIL**

What a joy to welcome a group of over twenty guests from the Grand Duchy beginning with the Easter weekend and extending beyond the next Sunday! Each participant made his own housing arrangements, but we were pleased to house

the Ulrich family, a German/ Mexican couple who've been serving for many years at CCC. The church here hosted the meeting location in one of its well-equipped classrooms, and a couple from the church supplied the noon and evening meals. Each morning and evening from Monday through Friday we gathered from 9:00-13:00 and 19:00-21:00 for lectures and discussions covering the first half of a 60-hour **introduction to the history of the church**, beginning with Acts and extending through the end of the fifteenth century. We are now positioned for the second section of 30 hours on the

Reformation through the present day (to be held in September in Luxembourg). In the afternoons we did short trips to see places of interest in the area, including El Torcal, sites in Málaga city, the mountain village of Mijas, the mosque-turned-RC-cathedral in Córdoba, and an old Muslim palace.



It was an intense week. People were saturated . . . and tired out! But all returned safely to the Grand Duchy the next week. Thomas Merz, who along with his wife Elena spends half of the year here and the other half in Germany, did the bulk of the logistics. It was a pleasure to spend personal time with most of the participants, although some families had to leave early and we could not host each family individually. Especially encouraging was seeing how these church leaders are training their children and teens. We were impressed and grateful for evidence of healthy relationships between moms and dads and the next generation. What with all the grim bad news circulating these days, this was wind in our sails!



**TEACHING AND TRAINING IN OUR SPANISH LOCAL CHURCH**

I continue to teach Bible classes in English three Saturday mornings each month. The Christian Growth Seminar, taught in English and interpreted into Spanish, is now in the thick of the section on the doctrine of Christ, dealing with the many OT prophecies about the Messiah. On other Saturday mornings we're working through Matthew's gospel with English speakers, and that group is going to be reduced for six months since a key couple will be moving to the UK to care for needy family members. On Wednesdays I continue to give a 10-minute devotional in Spanish, and am at the point now where Pastor Sam has asked me to give a whole Bible study in Spanish. That happened this week and will be continued for one more session as the people present their projects on Proverbs. In addition, I lead the worship service in English regularly, preach once a month in English (a series on eschatology has been launched), and lead the Spanish worship service occasionally.



With the exception of Pastor Sam, we are the only family in the church that attends just about every function in the church in each

language (four meetings each week). This takes a good deal of time, but we believe it's worth it in order to assist the pastor, to get to know the people, and use our Spanish.

**SO WHAT'S THE STORY ON SPANISH LESSONS?**

Kathy and I continue to plug away at Spanish classes each Monday and Wednesday morning with our teacher, Maria-José. Progress always seems slow to us, but we like the method we're pursuing now. There's more repetition and review. That's good for brains that aren't as quick to absorb vocabulary and idioms as they were in 1976! Kathy will tell you with a sigh that she often slips into greeting people in Luxembourgish before she catches herself. When I'm not sure how to say something, I'll take a stab at it by hispanizing a French word or structure. I'm always delighted if it happens to be on target. Your prayers for our language study are still needed, but God is helping us! Thank you!

**THE WRITING CHALLENGE**

I've been chipping away at my text for the French book on biblical covenants, which is due by 30 June. Please pray for this challenging project, which requires a good deal of Bible study and background reading on opposing views. I'm learning a lot in the process, but the hardest bit will be squeezing it all down to 4,000 words, plus footnotes.

**THE NIGGLING DETAILS OF BIBLE TRANSLATION**

During recent meetings of the Luxembourgish Bible translation committee, we've dedicated time to reviewing spelling choices for proper names in the Pentateuch. Quite an amazing task, in fact! The computer program we use allows us to pull out the names of 872 people and places from the mass of the Mosaic books' 187 chapters. It's a good reminder, by the way, that the Bible is a peerless historical document with details no one would bother to cook up from his imagination---place names that can be verified independently through archeology and proper names of people that match the linguistic forms unearthed from cognate languages in the Middle East over the centuries.

Term	Category	English	Counts	Found	Renderings (LTZ)
שֵׁט	Name	Seth	1/1	✓	Schett
נַחֲשׁוֹן	Name	Nahshon	6/6	✓	Nachschon
נַחֲתָן	Name	Nahath	0/2		
שֵׁט	Name	Seth	0/7		
נִנְוֵה	Name	Nineveh	2/2	✓	Ninevee
נוֹבָח	Name	Nobah	0/1		

GEN 36:13 Edit  
 Dat hei sinn dem Rehuell seng Jongen: den **Nachal**, de Seerach, de Schama an de Misa. Dat sinn d'Nokomme vum Esau senger Fra Basmat.

We all take translators' spelling choices for granted when we read the Bible. As our Bibles International consultant Glenn Kerr reminded us, "proper names are fossils of dead languages". To transliterate these names, we've adopted a simple policy: when a Luxembourger reads them aloud from the new translation, they should sound in Luxembourgish as much as possible like they do in Hebrew. Exceptions are required for well-known names (like Moses) which we can't afford to change without confusion or objections.

Take, for example, the name רְאוּמָה, "Reumah" in Genesis 22:24, the concubine of Nahor, Abraham's brother. It occurs only once. Letter-by-letter we would transliterate this as R-e-'-u-m-a-h. There's an *aleph* (א) stuck in there – a Hebrew guttural which is silent in modern Hebrew pronunciation, and most versions opt to just drop the letter entirely. The KJV *et al* have "Reumah", the Louis Segond "Réuma", and most of the German versions "Rehuma" or "Reuma". But if in Luxembourgish we opt for "Reuma" we have a lady whose name sounds suspiciously like the word for "arthritis" (rheuma) . . . an unfortunate choice! So we opt for Rehuma, placing an "h" in the middle to approximate the guttural א . . . and away we go to the next problem!

The ParaText computer program greatly facilitates checking for consistency in spelling, but at times it can take time to track down even one inconsistency. For example, Moses' handle occurs over 500 times in the Pentateuch. All the spellings were correct except one! And as it would happen, it was the last occurrence of the patriarch's name in Deuteronomy 34:12 that was slightly different! Because there are no shortcuts for finding these, it can be a tedious process. In all, we needed over ten hours of teamwork to get through them all. We completed them in late March, but there was still one more task: find the spelling errors for the name of Jehovah, which occurs a total of 1555 times. Of these, 1551 were correct and the other four would have to be tracked down by scrolling through a window by hand . . . the computer program does not yet spot individual misspellings of a word!

Another piece of good news: funding (EUR 20.000) for the reprint of the NT has been fully covered and the project has been officially relaunched. That volume should appear again for the general public before year's end, I hope.

## MORE ON EVANGELISTIC CONVERSATIONS

A **French lady from Luxembourg** has spent time with us on multiple occasions for lunch. She has no background in the Bible at all but seems to have sincere and pointed questions. She may move to the area after she concludes a contract in the Grand Duchy, and has offered to help Kathy and me with our Spanish.

As to our neighbors, we encountered **Enrique and Rosa** one morning this week. They told us they'd be taking a holiday in Mallorca, so we hope they'll be willing to show us some pictures of their trip upon return. **Daniel and Sandra** have said they intend to invite us over for coffee once they finish renovations in their house in the next month. The **Pakistani man** at the Kebab shop down the street has been back for a few weeks but will return to Germany in a few days. We've conversed briefly with the **grandma** with the special needs granddaughter and hope she can stay a little longer at some point. With the weather improving and getting warmer, and with the end of the school year approaching, there should be more chances to chat.

Kathy has been involved in a ladies Bible study with English ladies from church. They meet in a coffee shop where she heard an elderly couple speaking French. They are **Willy and Gisele**, a retired Belgian couple who've lived here for 25 years. We had lunch together at the coffee shop last week and they invited us to their home for coffee afterwards. We were able to make a few comments of a spiritual nature and they did not contest them. There's potential for more contact with these people. They're both in their late 80s and failing physically. Real spiritual needs are evident.



## SERVING LOCAL PASTORS

A missionary candidate for ministry in this area has just started attending our monthly pastors fellowship. He's a Venezuelan who hopes to set up shop with his wife and 14-year-old son in the coming months. He's keen on evangelism and seems like a teachable fellow. He comes highly recommended by sound sending-church pastors in Columbia, where he has been living for some time. I continue to work through key NT passages on ministry methodology with the men. Kathy's hospitality is always a hit!

## VIDEO MINISTRY BEGINNING TO GET FOCUSED

Our church's committee for **web site improvement** and video prep is making some forward steps. It appears we'll be farming out some of the technical side. The evangelistic **video** I helped a

Venezuelan brother from church make for a class he's taking in Peru has been getting lots of hits on YouTube.

## OH, AND THE BANANA PEEL! . . .

Almost forgot to mention this. Two weeks ago I was walking down our staircase, Spanish notebooks in the left hand and a bowl, spoon and small bag of rubbish in my right. I wasn't moving at my peppy normal speed, but five steps from the bottom step I felt my right foot slip and down I went all the way to the bottom—a banana peel had fallen out of the bag! The stairs are solid stone, and I could do nothing to break my momentum. I've never fallen this hard in my life. Shattered porcelain, coffee grounds and various and sundry other items that should have stayed in the bag ended up at the bottom of the stairs with me, but the banana peel stayed on step five. I got up and managed to walk to Spanish class; obviously nothing was broken, but the bruise was sensitive, to say the least.

A week later, close to midnight, I felt the contusion burst and I was immobilized in bed with fierce pain. Ice did not reduce the quickly spreading swelling. Our son-in-law Daniel, who fortunately heard the doorbell when Kathy rang it, managed to help me get out of bed and down the stairs to drive me to a local clinic, and then on to a hospital across the mountain on the coast. An x-ray showed I was still intact, but they asked that I come back the next morning for an ultrasound. We returned home in the wee hours, caught a few more winks, then drove back with Karrie for the additional exam. Antibiotics, anti-inflammatories and an ointment would help my body to heal itself. Praise the Lord that I broke nothing, and that it was not my head that was injured!

## ADMINISTRATIVE NECESSITIES

My visit to the hospital reminded us that we needed to get to the bottom of a mystery: why weren't we hearing from the **Spanish Social Security office** about medical coverage? We got in touch with a lady who had helped us with paperwork for foreigners, and she seems to have tracked down the reason—I was not in the system yet myself, so Kathy's application also was going nowhere. Now that all is in process, and it could take up to eight months for it to be concluded. As to taxes, it looks like we'll be paying a hefty income tax in late June to the Spanish tax authority, but that's just part of life, and it's covered.

## THIS AND THAT

Our granddaughter **Hannah** has just a few more Hebrew classes with me on Monday evenings before the end of the school year. She'd like to do some basic Greek next year, and there's a chance our grandson **Chase** might join us as well. **Dad Heijermans** has had some bouts with illness in recent weeks but keeps on with his reading and study. **Kristy** hopes to come for a visit this Christmas along with others in the family.

I'd better wrap this up. Thank you again for praying for us so faithfully, and for your sacrificial support. We're teamed up with Christ and His people---how much better than the world's sorry attempts to join hands for only passing things!

Gratefully in Christ,

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