

May 9, 2017

Dear church family,

I wanted to let you know about my upcoming plans to travel to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), June 6-16, 2017, along with six other Evangelical Covenant Church pastors/leaders as part of a Covenant Kids Congo (CKC) Vision Trip.

Why be part of this team?

- I am currently serving on the pastoral advisory team for CKC. The goal of this team is to continue bringing awareness of the ministry of CKC to churches in our denomination in Phase II of this work. It is our hope that additional congregations will promote additional sponsorship of children in the area of Ledia in Gemena, one of our main ministry hubs for the Evangelical Covenant Church in the Congo.
- Our church is already actively involved in both CKC and Team World Vision (TWV). I have played a key leadership role in getting our congregation engaged with both CKC and TWV over the past five years. Our congregation has provided over \$100,000 in the past four years (over and above our budget) to support these two ministries through child sponsorship and our teams raising funds (mostly outside of FCC membership) running the Twin Cities Marathon. CKC and TWV are working together to transform this community in Gemena with increased access to clean water, economic development, education and introducing their people to the hope of Jesus Christ. Currently two deep wells have been dug in this area (costing millions of dollars per well), bringing clean water to thousands. But the ongoing need is great. They need 13 deep water wells to provide clean water to the entire population of Gemena (approximate population 350,000). What a privilege it is for us to participate in this tangible way of ensuring brothers and sisters in this corner of the DRC have the very basic right of access to clean water.
- I will have the opportunity to meet in person the children my family currently sponsors through CKC. I will also have the opportunity to pass on letters and other greetings to the other children being sponsored by members of First Covenant. (I will be communicating more about how I hope to do this, in future communication.) What a joy and privilege to meet the young people we daily pray for and help to ensure their basic needs are being met.
- In addition, while in the DRC, I will have the opportunity to see firsthand the work of the Paul Carlson Partnership (PCP). Tom Verdoorn, chair of the PCP Board of Directors and during much of 2016 served as its interim executive director, first connected us to the opportunity to adopt a medical clinic through PCP three years ago. Since then, our church has contributed \$10,000 (again, above and beyond budget) to support the Bobangala Clinic we “adopted” in partnership with the First Covenant Church in Red Wing and Bethlehem Covenant Church in Minneapolis. Because of your generosity this past Christmas Eve, we received enough financial support to meet our commitments through years four and five.

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Tom is also traveling to Congo in May along with the PCP staff, including Dr. Renée Hale, PCP's new Executive Director. The team will be meeting with the leadership of CEUM, the Covenant's sister denomination in Congo, and making plans for the next phases of work for both the medical & economic development areas. Both Tom and I will have the opportunity to see firsthand the impact of the ministry faithfully supported by FCC and other across the ECC. We are working to find a time this summer to collaboratively share our Congo experiences with our congregation. Tom also wanted me to express his thanks, on behalf of the PCP Board, for your financial support and prayers for Congo and its people.

- It is always helpful when a pastor is able to bring a different perspective to their congregation, beyond the confines of one's own community. It is my privilege and holy responsibility to help our congregation see beyond the limitations of our own needs and wants. It is our holy calling as Christ followers to care for the most vulnerable—locally and globally. If not us—who will extend the hope of Jesus Christ to those in greatest need? I will be much more effective in accomplishing this responsibility having seen and experienced a place where I've only heard about 2nd or 3rd hand. This trip will enliven my heart, mind and soul. This seems like a win/win for the congregation and for me in my role as your pastor.
- And finally, I will be able to see firsthand how all these separate ministries of the Evangelical Covenant are interfacing with the work of our missionaries in the DR Congo and the Congolese Covenant Church. I will be able to bring back firsthand accounts of how God is at work in a part of the world that is still so far removed, foreign to us—even though many within our congregation can trace their roots back to this continent.

How?

Donn Engebretson, director of global advancement for our denomination, will be leading the trip. The cost of the trip is over \$5000. CKC is covering the majority of the expenses but First Covenant will also be helping to cover my trip expenses through a generous gift from the Women's Endowment Fund.

Your prayers are greatly appreciated—both before I leave and during our travels. My biggest concern right now is my visa. You cannot apply for a visa without proof of a Yellow Fever vaccination. Because I was on Prednisone earlier this Spring, I've been unable to get my Yellow Fever vaccination. I am submitting a letter this week from a physician in the travel medicine clinic, stating that I have an appointment for May 16th to get the vaccine. I am hoping and praying this letter will be accepted and the visa application will be processed. Your prayers are greatly appreciated as well.

I realize this is a lot of information but we thought it important for you to get the full scope of the trip rather than partial information. I'll continue updating the congregation with more current information and ways you can be part of this journey with me.

Thank you for your prayerful support.

Pastor Anne