

Dear friends,

Every new year, the SIM France-Belgium office asks us to write a retrospective of the past year that is sent to all our French-speaking financial donors. We wanted you to receive it as well. In spite of all the difficulties, obstacles, and uncertain future, God was still at work!

As for so many, the Covid-19 pandemic completely upended our ministry, family life and projects. In early March, Richard's doctors gave us the green light for our project to move closer to the SIM France-Belgium office in southeastern France. Less than two weeks later, the first nation-wide lockdown put the project on hold – and it's still on hold. As Richard is at high-risk for the Covid-19 virus, his doctors strongly advised him to stay at home even when there was no lockdown in effect. That led to him being house-bound for eleven straight months. All his scheduled training programs or teaching week-ends in churches throughout France were cancelled as well.

It became obvious during the summer that we needed to transition our ministry to full-time internet and videoconferences. After purchasing some equipment and a long learning curve, we started making videos for our YouTube channel as well as for future online training programs. At the same time, the Lord opened doors for us to provide assistance and counsel (in both English and French) to churches, pastors, and believers. By the end of the year we had ministered by Skype or by Zoom to churches and believers in 14 different countries!

One of the year's highlights was when one of SIM International's ministry directors asked Richard to write a three-part study on the spiritual battle against churches and missionaries. This study is part of a training program developed for SIM missionaries around the world. We praise the Lord for this opportunity to pass on what He has taught us over the years, and pray that it bears much fruit.

We've mentioned in past newsletters our involvement in SIM's For Freedom Ministry network which works to build up and support anti-human trafficking teams around the world. Our role is varied: we provide specific support, encouragement and prayer for the two main leaders of the ministry (one based in Australia, the other in New Zealand); Richard will provide training on spiritual warfare to the entire network; and we are available to help anyone within the network who is experiencing spiritual opposition in their ministry or life.

As for Valérie, her activities and ministry was also greatly impacted by the pandemic. Pre-Covid-19, she would spend time visiting or talking on the phone with women in our church – encouraging them, giving advice and praying with them. She was also involved in two different prayer and Bible study groups. As those groups stopped meeting, she started a small Bible study on Skype with two other Christians. This study has been a blessing to them and helped them address several situations in their families and church. Her prayer ministry, however, continues unabated: for family, friends, churches, and those we minister to. All that keeps her busy while she longs for the day when she can at last sit down with someone at the same table or couch, share a cup of tea, talk, and pray together.

We are amazed at the ways in which the Lord has enabled us to continue our ministry in spite of the pandemic. And we're amazed at how He has expanded the "outreach" of our ministry.

We are grateful as well for your financial and prayer support during the year. Your commitment to us, in spite of the on-going pandemic and its effects, is always special. As the Apostle Paul and Apollos worked together in the Corinthian church, and God gave the growth, we work together and the Lord gives growth and blesses those He leads us to serve. The fruit of our service is your fruit as well. We pray that there will be even more fruit in 2021!

Blessings,

Richard and Valérie