

# The Trans‘lantic Newsletter

## from Robert and Regina

2016 Aug– Sept Edition

I am pretty excited by the thought of our trip to the US at the end of this month. With all the chaos of pre-election foolishness, riots here and there, and lots of bad feelings and other mess being pumped by someone to the max, I am not sure what we will find. But there are loads of positive stuff going on still, and we can't wait to be a part of that. I think that what I write and share about in my reports, including the thoughts on the relational (Trinitarian) life of the father, son, and spirit, are truly a part of the positive side of things in change of perspective. Their always-positive actions are going on, just as they have been since before the creation. We just need help in seeing that, and discovering then their on-going daily relationship in us. Their actions yield assurance and love; what all people everywhere are looking for, and in need of, today. Details about our US trip, and other October items, will be in the next report.

For us, one big event of the Aug-Sept time period was our 2 weeks in Belgium with the kids. For Regina and I, Liam, of course, winds up being kinda the center of all that experience and activity, But everyone, including the larger family there, was involved. Liam started the first grade, and that was celebrated with a cookout and the presentation to him of a Zuckertute. This is a long tradition in Germany; the presentation of a large multisided cone filled with needed school stuff, along with a few other items like stuffed animals, books, stickers, small toys and of course some chocolate and sweets. In Belgium, they don't have this tradition, but Mario and Regina both desired it, and Regina and I imported it with us. It was fun, and a good excuse for a great grill evening get together with family.

We visited the congregation in Maastricht, Holland one Sunday. It is a small community where Mario and Co. attend. This particular Sunday, the shops were open in the historic part of the downtown, so we visited there after the assembly. Really a nice "Altstadt". With the nice weather, the city was rather jammed with people. Of course, a sidewalk café stop is a must for such a day, and we found one and enjoyed coffee, cake or ice cream. The river Maas flows nearby, so we rode a sightseeing boat for a short trip. Was nice to be on the river.

One little experience: As we returned to the underground parking area, Mario discovered a lost billfold on the entrance steps. We turned it in at a police station. The very next day, Regina, Liam and I were at an ice cream shop near their house in Belgium. We too found a wallet under a table. Funny part, was that such an event had not happened to Mario or me in remembered history, yet now having happened to us both in back-to-back days.

A personal family event: Regina's sister-in-law died in August. She had been in Hospice for a time as she had not been fit enough to have the planned follow-up treatment after a second brain cancer operation. Her husband, Peter, was there with her, as he had been for everyday before lunch till after supper time with her, and had fed her both meals. There was certainly no indication that she had pain or discomfort during this time. The funeral was in a small chapel in their small town just south of Chemnitz. The urn burial was in the cemetery there. Regina's brother seems to be dealing well with the whole situation, having clearly gained important insight about humans helping others through his hospice experience. He was moved by the whole process, and was willing to express these feelings publicly, and did so during a half hour TV presentation about the Chemnitz hospice. Christiana was filmed too, although she couldn't speak; all very open and with helpful and heartfelt commentary from the staff, from Peter, and from other patients who have now passed away. Christiana was 64.

Renovation on our purchased building has begun again, as some financial support has appeared. In fact, it seems now that we might be able to move-in in November.

English Bible study, and the regular Tuesday night Bible study continue as programs offered during

the week at the building. I really treasure the one on-one-contacts that we all enjoy on daily basis; lots of times without ever having met before the others encountered during the day. But those times just seem to be often overlooked; often classified as “the world” instead of “the church”. One day, a young friend and I were talking. He mentioned what he was learning and studying. I told him I was proud of him. He simply responded by thanking me and saying he doesn’t hear that often. Sadly, I don’t imagine that he does.

One neat surprise recently: we had the privilege of seeing a red fox right out in the open. It was just strolling along a sidewalk just outside of the city, carefree and enjoying the sunny day; seemingly oblivious to the cars passing by. It is the sixth fox I have seen in Germany; 2 when I lived in Oelsnitz, and 4 here in the city.

Impromptu connections into the other “kingdoms” that we share on the planet, ie animal and plant, are precious; certainly to be cherished and appreciated as gifts of the Father, and his nearness. My goat friend, Fritz, is apparently dead. He had lived along the route where I often walk. It was always great fun to meet him at his fence, wrestle with him by pulling on his horns, and just sharing with him about our common Creator. Along with our tug of war game, he liked being stroked and we enjoyed rubbing our cheeks together, naturally while being aware of the horns. Never once did he try to bite. He and I know and recognize the Father-given value of affection! Since my bet is that it isn’t over yet for him, I say “R.I.P. buddy”.

Regina is now retired, and settling into her mini-job at the same location. This means 10 hrs. each week of office work; dealing with their government funding. Her replacement, who is now her “boss” is a young lady. But it is unknown yet who will eventually do the job Regina is now responsible for. It is a current discussion.

August gave opportunity to celebrate Regina’s 66th. Her brother and his son and family got together with us at a local restaurant and enjoyed some real fellowship together. The son’s wife commented how extra nice it was to spend a few hours with others without talking only about sickness, aches, pains and problems!

This I treasure. In September, on a Sunday AM, a dear brother stepped forward in our assembly to share something about the Lord’s supper remembrance. He admitted to often reading some Bible verses or chapters way too quickly, and missing what is being said. I often do that too. I read verses that I have read many times in the past, but becoming aware of them in new light as they suddenly explode with their meaning.

I was listening and really perk’ up by this time as he spoke, definitely in unity with his spirit. He read the following; of course in German, but I will quote from the New Revised Standard Version: “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. We are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Cor. 5:18ff.

We can’t miss the reality that the **world** was reconciled to God through Christ. I had thought in the past that the later command “be reconciled to God.” then naturally meant “Okay, but obey and choose to be immersed to do your part”. But that didn’t make any sense after what Christ had done. Dr. Peterson, in his translation, says it in familiar words so nicely written to some also having trouble seeing through their Greek philosophy: “We’re speaking for Christ himself, now: Become friends with God; he’s already a friend with you.” - 2 Cor. 5:21 - The Message. I had to change my thinking.

That’s a brain sizzler, without a doubt. The brother had just seen what was really being said. It isn’t a doctrine, it is the reality. Jesus did what was on the Father’s heart from the beginning; bringing reconciliation of all Creation. Paul says to the Colossians “For in him all the fullness of God was

pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.” Col. 1: 19-20. Did you notice that - peace made through the blood of the cross? V. 21 then is not a conflict to what Paul had just said, it is about seeing the reality of yourself reconciled, as mentioned above. That is where life is! Otherwise, you slip back into your previous blindness; missing the fullness and joy and other gifts of the life in the father, son and spirit that has been given to you. The world has still been reconciled, and peace with the father has been made. That is significant! Neither you nor I can change that!

Such verses are clearly foundational thoughts, and thus they will be the standard on how I seek to understand all the rest of the Bible, including the verses that appear to support separation. When we view what seems to be separation as simply human blindness, then we have a far easier time with understanding. Many things clear right up.

Much love to you, and nice thoughts about you all!

Robert and Regina Lewis