

Karch Family

Rob & Martine, Caleb & Constance

Catalysts for Gospel Flourishing in the
French-speaking world

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French-speaking world - highlighted

In 2020 we grieved so many losses.

Some lost homes due to forest fires. Others lost friends due to politics. Some lost jobs. Others lost loved ones. Some felt unheard. Others felt put down because of the color of their skin. Collectively, we lost a sense of stability and freedom of movement. What losses did you feel? What are you grieving now?

Caleb was in the hospital twice and ended up quarantined in our home. It ended up being mononucleosis. Businesses opened up and Caleb, who is sixteen, got a job at a local rotisserie restaurant. (Now he's a pro at making chicken club sandwiches). He hopes to attend a Torchbearers Bible School next year. (Perhaps Bodenseehof in Germany).

Constance, who is in the equivalent of ninth grade this year, is starting her own dog-walking business, and loves art, organization, and our dog, Cookie. It has been a rough year for both of our children. At school they are confined to one classroom (rather than going from class to class), and only attend in person every other day. Like so many of you, they have been separated from friends and family for months. This is directing us toward Christ in new ways:



"Many of us, and I include myself, know the true meaning of Christmas, but we leave it behind at the sight and curiosity of what lays beneath the wrapping paper. We have to remember what it is all about and not let the traditions drown the true meaning of Christmas." - Constance

House-to-house meetings are prohibited where we live. We have not yet been able to bring my father to live with us. Churches are in a comparatively privileged situation. They can host up to 25 people per gathering, while theaters and restaurants are closed to in-person gatherings. As is the case with so many pastors, I spend countless hours on zoom calls, coaching five church-planting couples, in prayer groups, teaching church planting cohorts, and leading discipleship clusters. This led to near exhaustion both for Martine and I, and we realize that so many others are exhausted too.

As the year spun out of control in nearly every way, and our society was stripped of one thing after another, **the true state** of our hearts was revealed. As a society, we did not tend toward love for one-another, we did not demonstrate kindness. We are not the people we thought we were. Caleb, my son, describes a lack of kindness this way:



In a world without kindness, we see bullying, which leads to suicide. We see hate, which leads to genocide. We see racism, which leads to apartheid. This is why we need kindness. Because kindness is the cure to all things. It is the light in the dark. It is hope in war. It is life in death.” – Caleb (from his essay on kindness)

Kindness is powerful. We mourn when it is absent.

Peter realized **his true state** the moment the rooster crowed. Up to that point he had been the confident and sometimes brash leader of Jesus’ disciples. He worked hard to be the best disciple he could be. But it wasn’t enough. In that instant, he was stripped of everything. He had nothing left to offer Jesus but betrayal and failure. As Major Ian Thomas said in a sermon, “He had come to the end of himself.”

“Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (Jn 3:24)



On a trip in August to Uashat, an Innu reserve in northern Québec. We helped renovate a pastor’s home.

Do you feel like your hands are empty, like you have nothing left to offer Christ but betrayal and failure, like Peter? If so, then there is good news.

It was in that dark place of brokenness, weeping bitterly, like the seed that “falls to the ground and dies,” that Peter discovered life. He did not find a new house, or an acceptable political candidate, or the promise of stable employment. Rather, he discovered **the ultimate kindness** of the cross. On the shores of Galilee, Jesus reached into his soul and began the healing process. Peter’s fall into dark emptiness prepared him to discover life: abundant life.

I pray that our losses to move us in the same direction as Peter’s losses did. The transformative power necessary to produce individual and societal transformation is only found through a vertical, transformative relationship, with the Creator. He is our hope, our only hope.

Let us offer our empty hands, that we may find the transformative healing, **the abundant life** offered on the other side of that bitter weeping, for which he was born in a manger, lived, died and resurrected, for you and I, our families, our nation, and our world.

Merry Christmas!
Rob & Martine,
Caleb & Constance



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