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Life in Europe!

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Fulfilling Dreams to Live & Work in Europe



Recent trip to Giverny, France

Dear Friends and Family,
Can you believe it? I'm finally sending an update about my life here in Europe!!! Since moving here four years ago I've lived in Delft and worked as a freelance speech-language pathologist. Read on for highlights about my life and work in The Netherlands...

My "Family"

During the process of pursuing my Residence Permit, God has been faithful to provide the perfect home for me. I've been renting a room in the home of Herman and Betsy Bouwhuizen, American missionaries and pastors at my church, Levend Water (Living Water). We really have a great time as a "family" — my good friends Julie and Uta also live here. For those who don't know, Julie's an audiologist from the States, and Uta's a teacher and translator from Germany. We all enjoy day-to-day life together, and it really helps that we can all understand and share the joys & challenges of living in another country. Taylor, Herman and Betsy's 10-year-old Jack Russell, is also part of the family — and he pretty much "owns" the place!!

At a German Christmas Market — Julie, Uta & Coretta (Uta's sister)



Julie & Uta in Paris

The City of Delft is a great place to live! The size is perfect—not too small, yet small enough to easily run into people I know when I'm in the centrum (the old part of town). We live close enough to walk to the centrum, and it's easy to go everywhere by bike. There's an outdoor market twice a week, great little cafes, and canals—of course! Delft is filled with history, including interesting museums and old buildings. It's also known for the 17th century painter Johannes Vermeer, famous for his "Girl with a Pearl Earring" painting.

Travel Adventures

As you may have guessed, I've enjoyed traveling—both "close to home" and further away. Exploring The Netherlands has confirmed the fact that it truly is as flat as a pancake! But that makes bike rides in nature great! Walks along the coast of the North Sea are only 30 minutes away from home. I've visited many museums and enjoyed music concerts here and there. I've also loved hosting some family and friends who have come to visit.

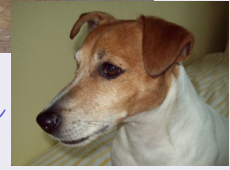
Germany has been a frequent destination for vacations and for joining Uta on visits to see her family. Other vacations have included Belgium, England, Italy, and Sweden. The highlight of Sweden was exploring the area where my maternal great grandparents lived before immigrating to the US in the mid-1800's. And for those who know me well, yes, I've explored both new and familiar places in France! I've also had the privilege of joining short-term outreach teams to Romania, Mali (French-speaking West Africa), and France. The adventures continue...



Winter view of Delft from one of our windows



Taylor aka T-man on the beach



Taylor, aka T-man and Mr. T



Herman & Betsy



Wartburg Castle, Eisenach, Germany



Julie & Sally in Zeeland



Stockholm, Sweden

Life in Europe!

Language Adventures

It's been great using my French here and there, and I've done my best to learn some Dutch. Julie & I have taken two courses, and I can understand Dutch better than I speak it. The problem is I don't practice enough—we speak English at home and all my work is in English. It's just too easy to get by with English!

Along with being a "language student", I'm also a "language teacher". I've been teaching a weekly English class at a women's center in Delft for 4 years now. It's grown to about 20 women and two classes—beginning and advanced. Julie helps co-teach with me and we've learned so much ourselves through teaching these women! Most of our students are refugees from countries like Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Somalia. It's very intense when they choose to tell their stories and I realize this is someone who really experienced these challenging things—it's not a book or a movie. Julie and I have also been able to share our stories with them—why we're here in The Netherlands, what it means to be a Christian, aspects of American culture, such as American politics, the history of Thanksgiving, everyday life in the U.S., etc. We have some great discussions! I really love spending time together with these women each week...plus I enjoy teaching them English!

Lunch with some of our students



Speech-Language Therapy

My freelance work has definitely kept me busy. My referral base has been through the international schools, initially the British School of Amsterdam, and then the International School of The Hague (ISH). This past year I've worked exclusively at ISH, and I haven't missed the long days commuting by train to and from Amsterdam! Even though the families pay privately for the therapy, the schools allow me to work on-site. This makes it very convenient for everyone involved!

It's been professionally rewarding to work with children with a variety of diagnoses. Seeing their growth and progress makes it all worthwhile! I've also loved the privilege of working with families and colleagues from literally around the globe. I've even crossed paths with Royalty when Queen Beatrix of The Netherlands attended the official opening of the new building of ISH. One of the children asked her "Where's your crown?", to which she replied "I don't have a crown". But she was wearing one of her trademark hats!

Speech therapy session



Queen Beatrix at ISH



Church Life and Home Groups

Most of my free time revolves around activities and relationships at church. I've enjoyed singing on the worship team and being part of a prayer team. Everything at my church is bilingual in Dutch & English - so it's home to many international students. They come to Delft to study at the Technical University or the UN Water Institute. I now have friends from many countries, with most of them coming from Asia & Africa!

For 3 years I've been co-leading an international women's home group. I love spending time together sharing about what's going on in our lives, praying for each other, studying the Bible, and learning to know God through a personal relationship with Jesus. The highlight, without question, is when a young woman gives her heart to Jesus. And we've joined many at the local lake where they choose to be baptized in water – an exciting adventure, especially in the winter!



Friends from home group



Baptism at the lake

Outreaches

The short-term outreaches I've joined have had a variety of focuses.
 > In Romania I joined a medical team and trained local staff in how to stimulate communication skills with special-needs orphans.
 > In Aix-en-Provence, France, we met university students and talked with them about Jesus.
 > In Mali I interpreted French-English for a group of American students. We helped at an orphanage in the capital of Bamako, and we shared about Jesus & prayed for the sick in local villages. I also helped train staff, but this time in the area of motor skills instead of speech skills. Those years working along-side physical therapists paid off for a 7-year-old boy with cerebral palsy! My experience in this developing country was very intense. I take my "hat off" to those who choose to live there—they are truly making a difference in people's lives.

Mali outreach team & village chief



Sharing a smile with a new friend in Mali!

A New Chapter...

In July I joined an outreach team in Paris, France. Our key focus was to encourage & pray for a local church. We also spent time praying for the city and nation.

France has an amazing Christian history, but like many western cultures, the nation has lost its focus on God's call and purpose. But God is truly at work drawing people back to Him. He's drawing the hearts of the French, and also the many internationals living in France...

AND He's drawing my heart back to France!!!

Read on for the "next chapter" for me in Europe...

Moving to France...Yes, a dream is coming true!

If you don't know, I fell in love with France on my first trip when I was 18. I didn't want to leave! And that's been true every time I've been there. I continued to study French in college and had so many credits that I ended up with a degree in French linguistics! I lived near Paris and near Tours during a summer in college, and my love for France, the French people, and the French language has continued through the years.

Before “turning the page” to this next chapter, I want to update you on my immigration status in The Netherlands. The entire four years of living here has involved applying for and appealing for a Residence Permit. It's been a long and tiring process, and this past year has been the most challenging! Just one day after returning from Paris I received a letter with a negative decision from the judge regarding my latest appeal. This means I'm required to leave the country. The basic reason for the denial is that the various government agencies involved don't see my work as having a significant positive impact on the Dutch economy. Continuing the appeal process would be costly and legal advice assures me the outcome will be the same. Even though the judge's decision has closed a door, God has already opened a new door!

Prior to the outreach in Paris I learned about an American couple, Robby & Tracy, who helped plant an international church in Hilversum in The Netherlands. They are now involved in the beginning stages of planting an international church west of Paris called “The Bridge”. They just moved to France in the Saint-Germain-en-Laye area in June, so I was able to meet with them during the Paris outreach. My friends Julie and Betsy also joined me, and it was so exciting to “connect” as we all shared our hearts for France, Europe and Internationals! I've also met some of the other team members who are part of the church plant. Some are Americans, some are Dutch, and some are from the UK—so even the core team is very international! And if you want to learn more about The Bridge, you can check out the website at www.thebridgeparis.com.

So here comes the “next chapter”!! Through prayer and input from others, the direction is clearly to move to France and be part of The Bridge. I'll be walking through a “new door” in order to be allowed to work & live in France. For awhile now I've had a desire to pursue a TEFL certificate—Teaching English as a Foreign Language. I've been accepted to a one-month teacher training program near Paris in October, so things are moving quickly! Julie will also be doing the training, and I'm sure many of you will also be hearing from her about her plans. There is a high demand for TEFL teachers in France, and previous non-EU students in this training program have interviewed and been offered jobs right away at the end of the training! To be hired in this way will be the “key” to open the door for a work visa for France. In case you're wondering, providing speech-language therapy through the international schools would require a similar process like I've pursued in The Netherlands. So teaching English will be “the door” into France. My main focus will be with The Bridge—building relationships, hosting small group activities, teaching Bible studies, etc.

My experience as an English teacher in Delft has shown me that teaching English in France will create connections with people from all over the world—something I really love! It's very exciting that my desire to teach will allow me to work in the mission field in France. This next season for me is an opportunity to be both a teacher and a missionary, or in other words a “teaching missionary”! My goal is to work part-time, which gives me legal permission to be in France, and then devote the rest of my time to “building The Bridge” in Paris.



Some of the outreach team at the Eiffel Tower



*From “The Bridge”:
Miaake on the left and
Robby & Tracy on the right*

Prayer Requests

Taking this next step is both exciting & challenging. I know I can't do it alone, but I can with a “team” around me. I'd like to ask you to consider “teaming up” with me to help impact many lives in Europe. There are two ways you can join me. One is by praying for me & for The Bridge. Knowing I have a prayer team to contact with specific prayer requests means a lot to me!

Current prayer requests:

- A smooth transition from The Netherlands to France
- Job opportunities to come quickly
- Favor for a visa to live and work in France
- Partners to sow financially into my new work as a “teaching missionary”
- Finding the right place to live, in the right location, and at the right price
- Developing close relationships with The Bridge team

European Missions Outreach

The second way to join me is to consider becoming a partner in my financial support team. I've been invited to be part of a missionary organization, European Missions Outreach (EMO), where tax-deductible financial gifts can be donated toward my work in France. My current goal is to raise \$1,000.00 per month to help cover my expenses in France and the U.S. Monthly financial support & one-time special gifts will help make this next step a reality—Thanks so much!

Make checks payable to: EMO

P.O. Box 211711

Augusta, GA 30917-1711

Note “For Lora Wiggans”

EMO is a non-profit ministry recognized as a 501(c) (3) organization. **The full amount (100%) of your gift comes to the mission field.**

I look forward to also hearing your news! You can email me at my **new email address:** lorawiggans@gmail.com.

Also, since I'm not very good connecting with everyone by e-mail, I've “taken the plunge” and joined Facebook! I hope we can stay in touch... **With much love – Lora**