

HOW THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IS AFFECTING OUR PARTNERS

ITMI

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Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. -Isaiah 41:10

As of mid-March, all but one of our partners reported that no one in their circles and networks was infected by the Coronavirus.

A few university students in **Leszek and Anna Wakula's** church, the only Baptist church in their city of Lodz, Poland, were infected.

Though most of their churches have been unable to gather, our partners are continuing to minister. Now is most certainly a time when the people of God worldwide need to be reminded to put their trust in Him.

Lazarus Yezinai, who is still able to carry out most aspects of his ministry in South Sudan, said, "People are in fear but when we came with the Word of God it encouraged them to put trust again in God."

All schools in **David and Taru Kumar's** state in India - including their primary school, Deepam - were required to close for two months. However, David was able to keep his travel plans. He journeyed 250 miles to equip mostly uneducated rural pastors to share Jesus with Muslims, who are the second largest people group in India.

The first week restrictions on social gathering were in place in Poland, **Piotr Zaremba** was still able to share his planned sermon via the internet, and the congregation met in home groups instead of their regular corporate gathering.

Though **Gospel Joy** workshops and concerts had to be cancelled, **Andrew Gorski's** new church plant in Poznan, Poland, has gathered virtually for prayer every day, and Sunday's

gathering was held virtually, too.

ITMI South African partner, **Gerhard le Roux**, shares, "Above all we know that God is in control of everything and that we, as a mission can rest in Him and His care."

Kelly, Cherise and Fifi Smith, also in South Africa, also affirmed the Lord's sovereignty over all. Kelly writes, "We look to Him during this time to know how to proceed as his hands and feet," especially since virtual gatherings aren't an option in their rural area.

In South Sudan, **Vicky Waraka** and a group of women spent a day in fasting and prayer. The situation "does not affect my ability to reach out and minister. The power of prayer is more [powerful] than everything [else]," Vicky shares.

Leszek Wakula shared his wise and Gospel-centered approach, "This is how we try to serve people around us - both Christians but especially non-Christians who don't have such inner peace. We share the message of peace and encourage people to turn their trust to God, at the same time not ignoring the seriousness of the situation."

This is exactly what the world needs from followers of Jesus, in places around the world, saved and equipped "for such a time as this."

The world needs all the followers of Jesus to cling to His hand and take care not to give in to fear on the one side, or resort to scoffing and "ostriching" on the other.

As the headlines tempt us to panic, we must not give in. We must not allow others to use fear to

Continued on p.2

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-Gerhard le Roux-



"The power of prayer is more powerful than everything else."

-Vicky Waraka-



"We share the message of peace and encourage people to turn their trust to God, at the same time not ignoring the seriousness of the situation."

-Leszek Wakula-



SOUTH SUDAN

I thank God in first place and ITMI and supporters of ITMI who are serving GOD'S people by what they have,"

says Lazarus, "I thank God in first place and ITMI and supporters of ITMI who are serving GOD'S people by what they have. His fairly new form of transportation, a motorcycle is doing great things in Juba. It has improved and expanded my ministry of evangelization and discipleship." This month he was able to visit a family 7 miles outside of Juba, South Sudan. The motorcycle is also helping Lazarus remain faithful to disciple the 20+ members of his household by transporting them to their church's Sunday gathering, while also meeting his ministry obligations.

POLAND

LAST MONTH WE SHARED that Piotr Zaremba would have an opportunity to speak at a conference in Lodz, Poland. ITMI's Leszek Wakula has partnered with other churches to offer a seminary type program for laypeople who want to understand their Bible better. Around 200 Roman Catholics from this program came to Piotr's two 45 minute sessions. To put this in perspective, if Piotr were to speak at a conference for Evangelical pastors, it would be difficult to get 200 to attend. In fact, historically, a turn out of 3-10 is normal. Piotr explains, the one half of one percent who identify as Evangelicals "are stretched thin."

These seekers have a keen interest in understanding the Bible. This is another sign of progress in this 30+ year journey of obedience to "translate the Bible for revival" that we have been on with Piotr and his translation team.

INDIA

LAST MONTH ITMI's David and Taru Kumar were able to help Ayan, a poor student from their Muslim slum school who had a cut his tongue about 80% of the way across it. As of mid-March, David said,

"Ayan's tongue is almost joined and he is out of danger. ...Please give regard to all ITMI friends and family. We truly, truly appreciate them and their partnership. We consider them part and parcel to everything God is doing through us and in us."

Continued from p.1

control us or interrupt our trust in our Savior and provider.

After all, we have something they do not have. We have a good Father who is faithful, by our sides, and in control. He is working for His glory and our good.

The world also needs us to refrain from scoffing. "Judgments are prepared for scoffers," warns Proverbs 19:29, and 21:24, 22:10 and 24:9 add their own warnings for scoffers.

A Christian author writes, "It is absolutely true that people immersed in media of any kind react to news and rumors in unhelpful ways. We look to Him during this time to know how to proceed as his hands and feet, acting in ways that do not increase our trust in God and our love of neighbor."

Scoffing - or "ostriching" - is a way of distancing ourselves from a situation. A way we can head off fear without having to admit our need for Jesus and trust in Him.

Scoffing prevents us from truly loving our neighbors, engaging in their physical or emotional suffering and being a faithful presence that demonstrates and declares that the Gospel is actually Good News for whatever trial we may face.

Instead, we are called, as the Smiths said, to be Jesus' hands and feet - at home and overseas - during this time of global trials.

To do that, we'll need to be on our own knees before the Lord, readying ourselves to share what we have - both physical provisions and spiritual hope - with a hurting world.

What's exciting is that our partners are already positioned and embedded in communities around the world, and mobilizing to reach out and, as **Piotr Zaremba** says, to seize this "God-given opportunity to minister" in new ways to a world that is filled with fear and looking for answers.

Charl van Wyk recently shared that in Stone Hill, the informal settlements and villages where he ministers, "The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) national epidemic in South Africa is not just a call to 'not catching' the virus, but an opportunity to teach our people about God's perfect Word and the freedom that comes through obedience to it."

Charl and his team have taken this opportunity to help this community understand the Biblical value on life and what that means

Continued on p.4

From the Director



DEAR TEAM: How God used Joseph and what it might mean for us during this worldwide pandemic.

There is a good chance that no one reading this letter has ever experienced a month like last month. No one knows if it is the beginning, the middle or as most are hoping, the end of the virus war that is being waged around the world. Most of us have never really experienced a war being fought on our very own door steps, and yet, whether we understand it, believe it or agree with it, a war is being fought regardless of our opinion or perspective. Add to that, the medicine of quarantine, staying at home, not meeting in groups, the tenuous situation of unstable unemployment and unstable businesses, many are saying that the financial collapse is an example of the old saying, "...the cure [being] worse than the disease."

I can tell you that for Evelyn Gholson of First Baptist Church in Tempe, Arizona who lost her dear, wonderful husband at the end of March to the virus that the world is fighting, the disease is far worse than any other discomfort or life change. Mike and Evelyn have been faithful encouragers and supporters to Darlene and I and ITMI for a long time. We are grateful to know that Mike has "gained" all that heaven has to offer and we pray for Evelyn to know the comfort of our loving Father.

This war, this world wide challenge, is not unique. Our Bible tells many real life stories of difficult and disastrous times. It is easy to be so comfortable in our own worlds that we miss the realities and challenges that other, less fortunate, even "before our time" people experienced and endured. I was reminded this month of Joseph. In Genesis 41, we see him enslaved. In a foreign land. In... a pit. If you haven't been to Egypt in the summer, you really miss the reality of Joseph's situation.

Then in verse 16, this enslaved, pit living, foreigner from Canaan, stood up, spoke truth and contradicted the all-ruling, "all-powerful" final authority of the day's perceptions and beliefs. It could have cost him his life. Joseph informed Pharaoh that "...it is not in me, God will give ...a favorable answer." God decided to use a broken, pit-living, no-account, Canaanite to save the world from starvation. God had a plan and no one can stop or delay God's plans.

We are deeply burdened and hurt for all the many who have lost and been lost by this virus. We don't know all the reasons, but we do know that God never makes mistakes and we also know that He has ways of using all situations for His ultimate glory and our good.

Just the other day, I was speaking to **David and Taru** in Bangalore, India. We were discussing the fact that they and all of the 1.3 billion Indians are now pent up in their homes for 21 days due to a government mandate. Indian police are beating those that do not comply with this edict from the Prime Minister. These are people that live not day to day, but morning to evening.

During this conversation with David and Taru, the Lord gave me the Joseph story with such clarity that I had to share it. Instead of David and Taru just living out the next 21 days on hold (probably more when the virus really hits that thickly, densely populated country) why not accept this new opportunity to show God's love and sovereignty?

What if we all banded together and helped David and Taru and any of the other ITMI partners who are able and so led, to "store up" basic staple foods that will be used, not for them, but to help others and show God's love to the needy around them. The average Indian has nothing and financially can store nothing. Then as this isolation, hunger, job loss, stopped food transportation, and any other complications that the really needy experience sets in, we can be God's lighthouse and helper. When David and Taru and I got to brainstorming about this great new opportunity to minister during this difficulty, they realized that during a time of handing out food to the Muslims, Hindus and other hopeless people, they can be bolder than ever with God's real truth and hope.

By faith in our God, our brother Joseph stood up and boldly spoke truth in a lost world. He also was used to care for his family and the world. I have already stepped out and committed funds to help our partners impact their communities during this incredible opportunity. I am asking you to consider helping us by doing the same. I know that times may be tough and uncertain from the human stand point, but as with Joseph's story, our God doesn't operate on our human level. He is not limited to what we can understand...that is why He tells us to trust Him and obey even when the storm is raging. May you rest this month and know the storm is in His hands.

In His Service,

P.S. We're thankful that you're standing with our partners, and wherever they are, whatever they face, they stand not alone, but shoulder to shoulder with their partners and brothers and sisters in Christ.

Continued from p.2

for the practical, every day decisions a believer makes.

Bread of Life's well-established programs of hope and help for the impoverished in Jesus' name enabled Polish believers to respond quickly by delivering food to impoverished Polish families in quarantine.

The le Roux family, serving in remote Onseepkans, South Africa, where supplies and clinics are a few hours away, have soberly faced the truth that, "our public health is under big strain...people are already suffering immune breakdowns because of HIV, AIDS, TB, diabetes, extremely bad diets, and others. Under these difficult conditions, the coronavirus could cause havoc."

So, they are harvesting extra Moringa, a plant whose leaves bolster the immune system, for their congregation. They're also planting extra sections of their family garden so they can love and share with their neighbors. At Onseepkans, they would welcome any help the Spirit might lead people to provide in implementing these giving and serving measures in the form of funds to buy food and personal hygiene supplies, and expand their irrigation capability for vegetable production in preparation to be His hands and feet.

Please specifically remember our partners serving among impoverished communities. Those living where conditions are crowded, medical care isn't easily available and economic downturns quickly destabilize, need our prayers and support during times like these.

Our prayer for each of you, our beloved supporters, our ITMI family, is that the Lord would reveal Himself and His deep love and care for each of you in new ways as you meet unprecedented challenges with His all-knowing guidance. May He sustain you, bless you and encourage you according to His will, and may He bless you with many opportunities to declare and demonstrate the Good News to those who need it during this season.

Summer Kelley, Steve Evers



ITMI's Charl van Wyk demonstrates wearing a mask while teaching the boys from the informal settlement of Stone Hill, South Africa about potentially life-saving personal hygiene.

**WE ARE
OPEN**

and able to answer your questions, pray with you or process donations while taking precautions to protect our staff and prevent the spread of the new coronavirus.

FOR PRAISE

1. India - Kumars - Ayan's tongue mostly healed and he is out of danger.
2. Zambia - Eugene Kalunga - Furniture delivery for village school expected before the end of March.
3. Poland -Piotr Zaremba- Signs of revival in Poland, including 200 Roman Catholics eager to learn from God's Word.
4. South Sudan - Lazarus Yezinai - Provision for reaching farther with God's hope and truth through provision of motorcycle.
5. Our partners are positioned to be the hands and feet of Jesus, sharing hope and help with those hurting and in need around the world.

FOR PRAYER

1. India - Kumar - Safety and provision for the impoverished families in Modi Road while Deepam primary school is closed.
2. South Sudan - Vicky Waraka - Vicky's brother went to be with the Lord at the end of March (non-COVID-19 related).
3. All - Protection and prevention for those vulnerable to the spread of Coronavirus, including the elderly, the impoverished affected by the economy and crowded living conditions, and areas where medical systems are already overtaxed.
4. All - Wisdom, protection and support for our partners as they seek to be His hands and feet in their countries.



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