

Mission Partner Updates (5/14/2020)

Praise the Lord, we have a new brother! He and I talked for almost 2 hours yesterday and he's committed his life to Jesus! He is super excited, wants to be baptized soon, and we'll be starting a bible study program together!

Between several opportunities to talk to people and then this friend's decision, the Lord has given us a wonderful confirmation that even in the midst of this virus, we are exactly where we should be.

~J & A, North Africa~

Tough times, but we know God is in control and we're trusting and remaining faithful in that! A little update from this side of the world ... We're on "lockdown levels" which right now doesn't mean much has changed. We're able to exercise outdoors in the morning from 6-9am WITH A MASK ON. But other than that, it's pretty much the same - businesses closed, hunger a huge issue in our townships, schools trying to get phones and data to students so they can do online learning (this is almost a joke), and lots of mental and emotional challenges as we keep hearing of retrenchments and more and more families struggling.

We're making it day by day - for me as a full-time working mom, it's more like hour-by-hour - but we trust the Lord will teach us new things and use us to share His love in this time.

~Andrew and Melanie Mokgatla, South Africa~

We have good news regarding our returning to the States in time for our daughter's wedding! We were made aware earlier today of some special flights arranged by the airlines that would allow us to fly to out and we were able to get Company approval and purchase for a flight to Europe later this month. While we still don't have the flights arranged from there to the US, we expect to arrive in Birmingham by late May.

~J & L, West Africa~

Our country has set a deadline of May 30 to re-open, but they will reconvene a week before the deadline to reassess the situation. So we really have no clue when travel might resume or what it will look like when it does. Until then, we are here in the US. Daily life here is tough. We miss being home and our living situation is not ideal. I am able to lead a couple of groups back home via Zoom, and even a couple of groups here in the States, but it is hard. Please pray for these groups and the people I am training through them. And please pray for us as we deal with various issues associated with our life here in the US.

~J, Southeast Asia~

Thanks for checking in. For about 10 days now, we've been able to get out with the children for an hour a day. It's been good, but we're feeling the drain of being confined in an apartment. Just pray for wisdom and patience. That would be a help

~D and L, Europe~

With the number of new cases going down, we are now able to have some more freedoms. Each phase will last about two weeks, and then they will evaluate if the situation is still good enough to move to the next phase. After phase 3, they are calling it "nueva normalidad" or new normal. Please pray that people are wise so as to not cause another outbreak, and please continue to pray for the many people around the globe who won't be able to enjoy these freedoms with loved ones that they lost to the virus.

- Continued opportunities for gospel conversations
- New opportunities for ministry and continuing ministries as restrictions are
- slowly lifted
- Eyes to see the needs around us (physical, emotional, spiritual) and wisdom for
- the best way to help
- Increased dependence on the Lord and continued growth in team unity
- The global church to be salt and light during and after this crisis

~Seth Graves, Spain~

As for prayers, just for continued grace as we balance schooling the kids (basically tech support at this point, ha!), enjoyment of this unforeseen slower season, and the continued advance of the Gospel in our city through the few things we are able to do.

~Steven Castello, Boston~

You can be praying about a location for our church. We are, like many, in a season of wanting to meet again on Sundays. As you know we meet in a school. There are hardly any places in our area of town that rent facilities so meeting live on Sunday morning is going to be a challenge this summer if the school district decides to stay closed. Pray the school opens up for us in July. If not, please pray we find a location to meet even at an alternate time.

Also you can be praying for our family during this season. May we grow even closer during this time of staying at home. What a blessing it is for me to see my kids more often. It can also be a challenge, but a good one for sure!

~Brian Hook, Tucson~

On our end, things are about the same. The current stay-at-home order expires on Friday 5/15, and we're hoping there's not an extension. But we expect in NYC our reopening process will start later and go slower than everyone else. Pray for patience as a church, it's hard to sit still while all forward-thinking church-planting has essentially stopped.

~Garrett Raburn, New York~

We're doing okay. We have a lot of people who don't have the capacity to engage via streaming of e-chat groups. And in many cases, their phone numbers change from month to month, even week to week. I guess this is the nature of doing ministry among the marginalized. There are a good number of our people that, despite our reaching out, we haven't been able to connect with in weeks. During normal operations, they're at church every week, but given the circumstances, we haven't been able to reach them via phone or otherwise. With this in view, our prayer requests would relate to concern for the spiritual, relational, emotional, physical welfare of people with legitimate struggles and who desperately need the fellowship of the church.

~Jeff Belcher, Baltimore~

We're really praying about this fall now specifically. I don't think we're going to be allowed to be in the schools (just a personal hunch) because of the cleaning aspects centered around kids back in school. They're even prepping teachers here for an adjusted type of school going in August, where kids to part remote learning, part in school.

That's the biggest "church" prayer request, along with focusing on generosity. With so many newer believers, stewardship is definitely somewhat foreign to them and we want to press in and not step away from that.

Personally, my dad just had surgery yesterday and will have a long road ahead in the coming weeks. He has a rare and aggressive form of cancer and they had to remove several things. The hardest part for me is not being there as 1. we're missionaries here (1,100 miles away), but 2. with COVID and not having access to see him for fear of spreading anything.

Tough times, but we know God is in control and we're trusting and remaining faithful in that!

~Chris Phillips, Denver~

Pray for my wife who's not been feeling well for the last couple of days. We don't think it's serious, but she needs prayer. Pray that I would have a deep rest in God as I try to take a little bit of time away. Pray for wisdom as we aren't sure how school looks for our kids in the next few months. Pray for our church, that we will build a stronger community, even in the midst of this virus. May everything that we're doing online bring people closer to Jesus. Thanks we love you guys, talk to you soon.

~Josias Laporte, Canada~

- We probably won't be allow to gather physically until 2021, pray that God will give us unprecedented favor with church online.

- Pray for Gatineau church plant. The big launch initially planned for this September will have to delay a bit. Pray that God will give us favor to do some ground work and have a bigger launch

- We still think multiplication despite Covid-19, we are planning another church plant for 2021-2022 in Quebec City. Pray that God will give us human and financial resources to do this
~David Pothier, Canada~

I love sharing success stories and all of the awesome things God is doing here, but we also need lots of prayer because we don't have 100% changed minds with abortion minded women. Yesterday was a good example of that. All of our abortion minded women need prayer because we don't get to control the people speaking into them after they leave us, but have very sad experiences too.

We had a young client and she came here thinking we would perform an abortion (not uncommon), but once we walked through the procedures, shared options and then revealed she was carrying twins, the young woman changed her mind. But a family member was waiting in the car and promptly sent her back inside to schedule an abortion procedure. Obviously, we told her we do not perform nor do we refer clients for an abortion and the family member was invited in so we could walk through the procedures with her. But this family member was unmoved and started immediately googling other options. Thankfully she will not be able to have an abortion in the state because of our laws. But we know many women drive to Atlanta.

Please pray for this precious young woman to find someone in her family to champion her. Pray that the family would have her heart pricked by the Holy Spirit. Pray this mom will have a voice in the process. We know God has a plan for those babies and for our client. He is the God of miracles.

~Lisa Hogan, Sav-a-life~