



TENTMAKERS BIBLE MISSION

JUNE 2020

Changing Times

"Unprecedented times"... "social distancing"... "a new normal"... These words and phrases define this moment of uncertainty we find ourselves in. While we have all been affected, missionaries around the world face unique challenges. In this newsletter we are looking at how our missionaries are serving during these changing times.

We are still in lockdown, but we are staying in touch with the believers through social media. It is tough to know that so many in the slums are having trouble finding food. The Covid-19 virus is especially affecting those in poverty in our city of three million people.

Paulo and Janis Alencar (Brazil)

Read more on Page 2 about how the coronavirus has impacted our missionaries around the world.

Nathaniel McRae, along with his wife Kara and four children, will be moving to LaGrange, Wyoming to serve in the Home Office. He will be involved in developing resources for missionaries and church planters.



Raising Support During a Lockdown

by Nathaniel McRae

A pandemic has prompted a response on individual, societal, and governmental levels. This means just about everyone's plans have been upended, and it is no different for missionaries raising support. We had presentations planned, including three out-of-state trips. All have been cancelled. We had expected to move across the country in early May, but all the good-bye parties were cancelled, and the moving plans postponed to a nebulous future date. This leaves us with the question, "How do we accomplish what we were planning to do, now that we are in a drastically changed situation?"

As churches are converting to video calls and streaming services, our first thought is to try to offer video presentations. While video calls are not an adequate replacement for a true meeting of the body and community of believers, they are a wonderful tool for when that is impossible. We are pursuing this, but it takes time, especially for such novices in the video world as we. We have also seen that many churches and believers are, understandably, in "survival mode" right now. Extra things are just not on many people's agenda. They are taking things day by day, emotionally and spiritually, raw from being cut off from the body of Christ, and worn down by constant threats of diseases and joblessness. So while we continue to look forward to plans to meet in person, and are still hoping to finish a video presentation, we have had to learn that our plans are not as important as we think they are. And formal support raising, at least today, seems like it's just not going to happen. So what do we do while we wait?

It took us a few days, but we realized that while we are cut off from the people we were serving, and on hold for the ministry plans we are

anticipating, we need to get busy serving in ways we hadn't planned. We are learning to meet with people in different ways. I am still working, so I have contact with some of my coworkers, and Kara has been continuing her Bible Study over video. We have contact with several people who have lost their jobs, or have been fearful to leave their homes, and have tried to encourage them by bringing groceries. Even a kind word goes such a long way, especially in a society that has eliminated so much positive interaction. We have had several chances to share encouragement from God's Word, including the Gospel of Salvation with some who have not believed. We are learning to see God's plan in this, instead of looking back on our own ruined expectations.

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If I could sum up, I would say that support raising during lockdown has been a time of learning for us. The things we are learning include, but are not limited to:

1. Everyone's plans have been adjusted, not just ours. Look out for others.
2. When God changes our plans, the sooner we stop trying to reconstruct them and start serving in the new arena He has given, the better.
3. Having said that, we still have to move in the direction He has called. We will have to adjust our support raising plans, and they will look very different than we expected.
4. A steep learning curve, or unseeable future are not really that different from normal, and are not an excuse for inactivity.

So, "How do we accomplish what we were planning to do, now that we are in a drastically changed situation?" We don't. We hold our plans loosely, ready to let them be molded into what God's plan was all along.

Encouraging News From TBM Missionaries

Facing the Challenges of Covid-19

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Victor and Maddy Ramirez (Spain)

We have seen God provide in wonderful ways. I am still able to teach many of my English classes now online at home. I've had some good conversations sharing hope with people during this time. I am also continuing to prepare for the seminary class I am teaching next fall. Oddly enough, because of the quarantine, we have seen our neighbors more. We look forward to more opportunities to share Christ's hope with them.

Ronnie and Meela Heerah (Trinidad)

Globally, the church has been challenged to explore creative ways to stay connected and to encourage each other. We have online services produced from our home. We also have online small groups and Ronnie even started online teaching his Tuesday night Bible Doctrine Class - Foundation for Life. Our appointed elders and deacons are doing a good job shepherding our people through virtual small groups and via social media. As a church we are making every effort to be a blessing to our members who have lost income as well as challenging our members who may not have been affected this way to be a blessing to those around them.

We have just completed a food drive providing food hampers for 100 families. We also provided gift vouchers to assist needy families in purchasing prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

Since the lockdown two months ago, we are personally anticipating the loss of approximately 20% of our personal financial support. One of our very faithful ministry partners who stood with us for that last ten



years informed us that he could not continue, due to his job situation. But God remains faithful and we will trust Him.

We continue to manage things at the church and at home doing our best to ensure that our people are growing spiritually and that their physical needs are taken care of.

J.D. and Sara Bennett (Spain)

We are learning that if we are committed to the will of God, we don't have to fear, or worry, or get angry about disappointing circumstances. We can have peace and contentment because we believe that God never changes. Our ministry center, which received very little support in these first couple years, was offered a truck full of school supplies and puzzles before Spain was put on lockdown. Because of this donation, we were able to scrape together a community event to distribute school supplies and we ended up



having our largest turnout ever, over half of which had no previous affiliation with our church plant. Several students have been enthusiastically participating in our [English] conversation club.

This gives those who have been locked in their apartments since early March a way to feel that someone cares about them.

TBM Missionary (Europe)

One thing we have given much energy to is to encourage the people in the church to read the Bible on a daily basis. On Sunday

mornings I had already been giving teaching to help the people understand the context of the passage they would be reading. Once I got to the States, I decided I would write a short summary of the passages we would be reading on a daily basis. Frankly, I have been shocked, but very, very blessed by the response of the people. I have had many positive remarks about the explanations of the passages, and several people saying they have never understood so well how

scripture can apply to everyday life. So, now I am giving more Bible teaching and encouragement than I ever could, in a message once a week. I am getting more response to these daily emails

now than the number of people who ever attended all six Bible studies in a week. The COVID-19 confinement has produced a dynamic where people have been attentive to listening. This is something only God could have done!

Dan and Sharon Leatherwood (Spain)

We had to make a decision about Cowboy Camp. We have to close it down this year. It is the first time in 18 years that we have closed it. We offered to parents to sign up their children for the 2021 camp season, and about 75% of the families took us up on the offer! Two and a half of the camps for next year are already full!

We praise God for our missionaries and their desire to serve in these "unprecedented times." We ask that you pray for our TBM family "that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ."

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TENTMAKERS BIBLE MISSION
P.O. BOX 160, LaGRANGE, WYOMING 82221
(307) 223-9400
info@tentmakersbiblemission.org
tentmakersbiblemission.org

Tentmakers Bible Mission is a faith mission. Our purpose is to facilitate the planting and nurturing of independent Bible-centered churches throughout the world. Tentmakers assists missionaries as they establish churches in North and South America, Africa, Europe and Asia, and is open to opportunities throughout the world.