

Covid-19 Impact on our world outreach



May
2020

Mission News & Helping Hands

Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Board for World Outreach

Sharing the Gospel in South America and Asia

From the Editor—

Rev. Thomas Heyn
Board for World Outreach Administrator

It's impossible to avoid news about the coronavirus. It's a worldwide pandemic. And it has touched each and every field with whom we work. I asked leaders from each field to write a few words about how it has affected them, their families and their congregations. They shared much. This newsletter can only give you highlights from their responses.

Please read their stories, keep them in your prayers, and, as God enables, consider how you might help answer their requests.

May the Lord watch over and bless all of us, his children, as we live through these times, trusting his infinite mercy and goodness.



Peru

Jaime Cortez
pastor, professor
Lima, Peru

We thank God no one in our churches has yet been infected with the coronavirus. The government has implemented measures to prevent the virus from progressing. There now is a curfew from 6 p.m. to 5 a.m. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday only men can go out, and then only to the market, pharmacy or hospital. Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday only women can go out with the same restrictions. Sunday nobody leaves..

The Government is trying to help those most in need with a 380 Peruvian Sole bonus (\$111 US dollars), but this is not working well. They have given a budget to the municipalities so that they can buy groceries and distribute to those who need it, since almost nobody is working due to quarantine and some government restrictions. That is not working well either. What is worse is that all who do not comply with the regulations will be registered at the police station to be prosecuted after all this is over.

I have been impressed to see so many people who are dying in the world, to see doctors and nurses pray together before going to work and to see policemen together praying for the Lord's protection so that nothing bad happens to them nor that they get infected by the virus when they patrol the streets. We trust our Lord Jesus Christ that he will deliver us very soon and

we will return to our jobs with some changes that we will make.

Many people, including brothers of our church, do not have money to buy their food and some basic necessities. Although public and private schools began to teach online classes, teachers at our two schools have not been receiving their wages since March because unemployed parents cannot pay the tuition.

In these difficult times we are going through, **I turn to you, my brothers in faith in Christ Jesus, to ask for your help to buy food for our brothers who cannot buy food. We need help to pay our teachers from both "Martín Lutero" and "Jesús Redentor" schools. I also ask for your prayers for our brothers in the faith throughout Peru who are having a difficult time with all that is happening in the world.**



Peru

Ronal Rivas, pastor,
Tarapoto, Peru, and
missionary to the
Shawi people

At this time, we do not have any infected brothers in the church at Tarapoto (gateway to the Amazon). I hope no one becomes infected among our low-income brothers—they will not be able to bear it. Many people call me, write to me that they are praying for the church and my family. We are using devotions and prayers through the Internet. While

some brothers have the Internet, others do not. I visit them twice weekly to help them with food, but to avoid infection, we cannot talk or visit.

Because my wife is a nurse on the Covid-19 Team, she works Monday through Sunday. I have minimum contact with her at home. My daughters are very afraid that my wife will get the virus.

I have not had any contact with the Shawi pastors and leaders. Under the grace of God, I hope everyone is well. When I travel to Yurimaguas, the river port city, I look forward to any news from them.

Some Peruvians think God is punishing us while others blame China. I think many have reached out to God, asking for protection and deliverance from this pandemic. I hope this will allow us to evangelize many people.

We need help with food, especially for two families in the church at Tarapoto. And help for three families in Yurimaguas where we are studying the gospel every month. These people do not have stable work. They work as sellers in the market, another is a motorcar driver.



India

*Pastor G.J. Ananda Raju
pastor and president of
LMSI-Rajahmundry
Rajahmundry, India*



We praise and thank God for His gracious guidance to us. Sunday worship services, Lenten prayer meetings, Good Friday service, and Easter sermons are being video recorded and transmitted through WhatsApp and YouTube, so that we are able to feed all the members with spiritual food, a great comfort in this time of chaos.

The Government imposed lockdown on all India. 1.3 billion people are not allowed to go outside. God has provided every one of us the chance to utilize this extra time in prayers and meditating upon God's word.

We are submitting our lives to Jesus that whatever happens is for our welfare because "We know that for those who love God all things work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Sadly, many denominational and social gospel preachers are preaching frightening messages in the media stating that it is nothing but the judgment of God, the end has come. This has given us an opportunity to speak and share God's love and His good and gracious will. We reach out by mobile devices to comfort those who are doubtful about such messages and to discuss God's grace and forgiveness.



India

*Solomon Mamidi
pastor and president of
LMSI-Hyderabad
Hyderabad, India*

I serve St. John's Lutheran Church in Karmika Nagar. It is in the red zone where many positive cases have been found and where many of our members live, so please pray for us.

A lot of our members are daily waged workers and they do not have savings. They are not prepared for the country being locked down. **Many are unable to feed their families sufficiently.** The available resources are being stocked up by the richer or middle-class people and this has hit the daily waged workers like a famine. **The situation is very serious and getting worse** since they have not been paid wages for more than two weeks.

Unfortunately, since many villages and our gospel workers do not have a smart phone or a wifi connection, they were unable to take part in the service. For them, it must have been a very tough time to not have church services. The government is arresting pastors if more than 5 people gather as a congregation.

Due to the shutdown, I have more time to spend with family, share some thoughts, and am able to pray, praise and worship the Lord together with my family every day.

The pandemic has definitely shaken up people and brought them to think about why God would allow this to happen. However, they do not blame God, rather they fear God more. This has driven them closer to God. In fact, I preached online from Exodus how God sent the ten plagues to Egypt, yet how the Israelites enjoyed the love and grace of God. Jesus, the Passover Lamb, shed his precious blood to wash away the sins of the world and brought us out of the slavery and bondage of sin. We still have a journey on this earth which might test us. But the Word of God strengthens us because, whenever we partake in Holy Communion, we remember Jesus.



Chile

*Jon Gross,
seminary student
Linares, Chile*

In Linares, we have ten cases of coronavirus as of April 10, 2020 but no one from our church nor friends or family of church members.

José Miguel became a member of our church a couple of months ago and was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer exactly a year ago. It's difficult to get his proper medication while the hospitals are on lockdown, so we pray for his pain to go down and for him to get the proper care he needs.

For church services, I have been providing a YouTube video of me presenting the liturgy and a recorded sermon with songs to sing with me at home. I have been calling each member at least once per week and giving a quick devotion and prayer. We have a WhatsApp group with our church where I share service times and a devotion or Bible verse. This situation has forced our congregation to come together in prayer life and in helping each other. **We have gathered donations from members to give food to those members who have no job and struggle to get to the store** because public transportation is limited.

I have gotten many questions about why God would do something like this. Is God a good God if he kills people? (He doesn't kill them, but he does allow them to die.) So, in my opinion it is great that these questions come up and I can answer them for various people. We have seen many people engaged in the YouTube videos as well. A typical Sunday has around 20-25 people in attendance, but with these videos we have up to 80 or 90 views! People are interested and love hearing God's Word in tough times.



Chile

*Mario Galvez
pastor and synod president
La Cisterna neighborhood
Santiago, Chile*

By the grace of God, we have not received news of any members of our churches infected by Covid-19 despite the widespread presence of the virus in our country. In Santiago, there are more than 7,000 cases of Covid-19, 65 deaths nationwide and an average of 500 cases developing daily. We place ourselves in the hands of God and in his grace and mercy. I ask for your constant prayers for our church and its members.

The government in Chile implemented an exceptional state of catastrophe for the entire nation. From 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m., no one can exit to the street. Sanitary barriers restrict entry to some neighborhoods with a greater number of infected people. The borders with neighboring countries are closed and international flights are restricted.

For a month now, we have been holding services online, via livestreaming on Facebook and by Zoom video conference. We have it recorded for people around the world to view. Zoom has also allowed us to hold classes for our members and seminary students, a blessing from God.

This has had a great impact on our family finances. We experienced a drop of 80% among our students in our Kenpo Karate academy. We started with classes by video conference. With just 20 students out of more than 100, we keep going with great sadness, because many parents of our students have lost their jobs or have had their wages reduced.

Today we face a crisis due to Covid-19, while in the near future we will face a social crisis due to the lack of jobs and hunger. In the midst of all this, there is a great opportunity to spread the Word of God through technology. The challenge is learning the best way to do it. A large number of people watch our online services. However, we have just entered autumn and then winter in Chile and the problems are going to get worse. Perhaps only in September, when our spring begins, will this begin to improve. Until then, the worst is still to come.

In the meantime, I comfort the people by speaking of the fact that Jesus suffered immeasurable death and suffering in pain and hardship for all the sins that he bore on the cross for us. So, our hardships and sorrows are nothing in comparison, and we can rest in our Lord and Redeemer.



South Korea

Sam Choi, pastor
Seoul, South Korea

The son of one of our members was studying at a college in New York. When he returned to Korea several weeks ago, he got a corona-test at the airport. He was positive and went straight to the hospital. But now he has improved a lot. Although he suffered quite a bit, he was restored by God's help.

There has been no city lockdown in our country like the lockdown in Wuhan, China; however, the government recommends social distancing. Everyone wears a mask, measures body temperature at the entrance of most government offices or companies, and washes hands frequently. Worship is online. All other activities, such as Bible study, meetings and visiting members' homes has been stopped. The government encourages us to avoid crowds.

The coronavirus has given us an opportunity to recognize our human weakness. It warns us about believing science will provide all the answers.

Currently, Korea is recognized as an exemplary country for corona prevention, and many countries want a Korean corona inspection kit. I hope Korea can help more countries by doing these things and that Korean Christians have more opportunities to do mission outreach.

News from other mission fields

Latvia, Czechia & Ukraine

All three of these fields have been going through things similar to those mentioned in the stories above. You can find more information on their stories in the upcoming June issue of the Thoughts of Faith newsletter.

In other news

Kenya & Australia

The Board for World Outreach is working with these churches on more of a mentoring basis. Reports from these countries indicate that they, too, are facing similar circumstances. We regret that, due to limitations of space, we cannot bring more information at this time.

What can you do to help?

- Pray for each of the mission fields in this newsletter. Pray that God would use this pandemic for a blessing to the church members and a door for outreach in their countries.
- Please—prayerfully consider a gift or regular donation to the work in the various fields. Every field, and some more than others, has many needs where God's people can provide much needed assistance.
- Please—**prayerfully consider a gift in response to specific requests mentioned in the individual stories.** Consider also a regular donation for the work in the various fields. Every field, and some more than others, have many needs where God's people can provide much needed assistance.
- *You may designate a gift to a particular field or project on the memo line of a check.* You may also go to www.els.org and click on "Donate" in the top banner on the right-hand side.
- If you have questions, please contact us in the following ways:

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