

Pentecost - All over the world, the Spirit is Moving!

Acts 2: 1-21

so all these people in Jerusalem heard about Jesus, and they took their new faith home with them. And now there is a connection around the world... so when this dreadful disease came along - guess what.. there were people everywhere to help and love their neighbours.

We've heard a lot on the news about the virus and what's going on in the uk, and there has been a mix of good and bad stories. But here's view from round the world...

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Here is a story from India, from a mission project with USPG in Durgapur Diocese in N. India India's response to the virus began with a nationwide lockdown and so the plight of the daily wage labourers began. Many of them come from small villages. Some work part of the year as farmers and the rest as daily wage labourers. Others work year round in the city, sending home most of their earning for their families.

With the lockdown in place, they lost their livelihood and their ability to feed themselves and their families. Whether it was the labourers in the cities or their families in the village, neither had the funds to buy food and others essentials. Thus began a mass exodus of these labourers walking for days to reach their homes.



The Diocese of Durgapur is close to the border of the country, where there are many who are daily-wage labourers. With the lockdown in place, most of these families are struggling to feed themselves.

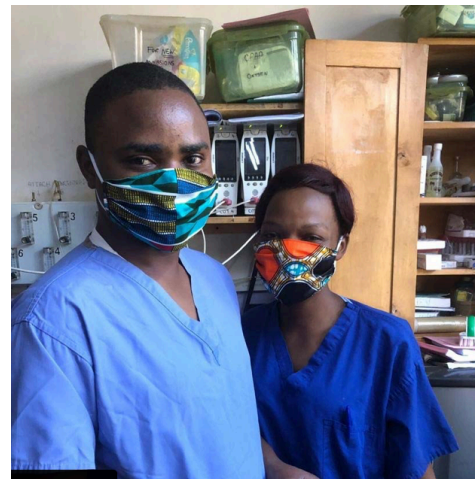
The Antihuman Trafficking programme is well known in the districts of North and South Dinajpur for their efforts to prevent human trafficking, and it teamed up with the local authorities. They held awareness program about the virus and its impact and also distributed relief packages to the families in the area.



250 families were aided. The relief boxes contained rice, pulses, oil, salt, soap bars and more. It is through the prayers and support of our friends that we have been able to reach out to those in need.

Here's what's happening in Uganda

Our "tailoring project" is now engaged in making thousands of face masks for staff and partners at our local health centres and hospitals. As well as creating much needed employment for tailors, the masks will make a big difference in a stretched health service. Anna and Dave Bishop - mission associates working in Uganda



And in Blantyre, Malawi, Caroline and Peter Finch are mission associates, based at the Central Hospital.

They say " Covid-19 is behaving very differently to patterns in the UK. Malawi has a slowly growing number of cases and there are still no Covid-19+ patients in the hospital yet. We are relieved that lockdown did not go ahead. We could not see the benefit of flattening the curve for a health service that lacks capacity to respond and where soap, running water and social distancing are privileges not available to the vast majority of Malawians.

Markets and streets are still busy, and crowds are gathering for political rallies. Last year's presidential elections were annulled and campaigning for July elections continues unabated. There was a strike last month at the [Queen Elizabeth Central] hospital over lack of equipment. Thankfully it resolved within a few days. The staff now have some PPE and are being given transport to work so hopefully this will go some way towards helping nurses to stay on the wards even when they are nervous. On the medical wards, options for treating Covid-19 are still very limited, with only 12 beds able to deliver oxygen.



A family carer at Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital in Malawi learns about the spread of coronavirus using blue washable paint.

Peter is still doing ward rounds and emergency endoscopy lists for which he does have PPE. I am now working get basins of running water and soap on the wards. Most time and energy has gone into improving safety and sanitation at the Guardians Shelter. This is the site where guardians (relatives who do all the nursing care for patients) sleep, rest and cook. I was imagining how many ways it could fail but the scheme is working. The nurses are thrilled because it has taken a lot of pressure off the wards. . I had been assured many times that this system would never work so it goes to show that miracles are not a thing of the past.

Here is the verse on our fridge that has encouraged me enormously recently.
 “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”
 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18

Derek and Jane Waller are helping teach churches in Madagascar about coronavirus protection



**Although the economy in Taiwan is suffering badly, so far there has been no lockdown or isolation imposed by the government, and although many activities are cancelled - schools, work and Sunday church services continue, more or less as normal
 Catherine Lee - Mission partner**

Finally - Guatemala...

It was day 11 of Guatemala's coronavirus lockdown.

Azaria Spencer, who works with the Church Mission Society with the Street Kids Direct, - which helps rehabilitate and feed street children.

She had arranged to meet one of these street children - Danilo - to pass on a food and care package for his family.

She continues the story..

I arrived at the centre in time to join the team Zoom call, during which we prayed together, lifting the families and vulnerable street people we work with before God, praying for Guatemala and the world at this challenging time.

After our meeting, as I waited for Danilo, I potted about the centre, sweeping up dead cockroaches – I lead a glamorous life – and watering the plants.

One of my work friends called. A shopping order had been made on our behalf at a nearby supermarket. Could I go with Danilo to collect it?

What a huge blessing that people are still willing to donate during this difficult time. Of course, I was happy to go, although a little nervous.

I was sent the receipt and assured that the supermarket was close by and that the guys at the supermarket would help bring the delivery to our centre.

Next, our director called to ask if I had the money for Danilo - its a kind of monthly allowance. I said yes, but then we realised I had misunderstood the amount and was short. He had told me Q500 (Quetzals) not Q50. Numbers in Spanish are tricky for me and I had heard wrong. But never mind, I could give him Q100 today and the rest next week.

I knew Danilo wouldn't mind and would also be happy to help me collect the donation.

Danilo arrived shortly after and we were soon on our way into the notorious La Terminal zone to find the supermarket. Sounds easy, but the streets of La Terminal are never quiet, not even during a lockdown. Thankfully we were well before the curfew hours.

After going to the wrong supermarket, we went further into La Terminal, through the crowds, being careful not to get too close to anyone, and found where we needed to be.

Finally, when I explained about the photo of a receipt I had on my phone for the fourth time, I was directed to a manager whose signature was on the receipt in question.

Having waited to get into the supermarket – alone and after having been 'sprayed' – I waited a further 25 minutes for the order.

Finally, our donation was ready, and then they told me they couldn't take it to our centre.

They unloaded our donation onto the street and Danilo and I stood looking at it for a minute. The traffic was gridlocked and we couldn't carry it.



He decided to go into La Terminal and find someone to help carry it.

So there I stood, getting sunburnt, and waited some more – being reminded with every look that I am a white woman in a Latino world.



Danilo saved the day and returned with a man who proceeded to load up half the boxes onto a strap he held with his forehead!

They left for the centre and I found some shade to stand in as I contemplated having to ask Danilo for the money back to pay this man for helping us.

On the second and final trip back to the centre I told Danilo I didn't have my card or any more cash. He said he had already guessed, was happy to pay the man and what's more buy us all a refreshing coke. What an absolute champion. This is the kind of men we are raising in the Street kids project.

I was out of my depth but God placed me with Danilo, one of the young men in the group which I lead, to support me. Well, actually to take the lead. It was humbling and an honour to let him take the reins and to trust him to get things done.

Today God showed me to not focus on the difficult unexpected moments, such as going to the wrong supermarket, but instead to focus on the amazing unexpected moments, like seeing a boy who has a difficult past becoming a good man. Maybe at this time of complete upset amid the very unexpected Covid-19 pandemic, there will come other amazing unexpected things to be thankful for. Opportunities to be church outside of a building or a service, families coming back together and maybe even being saved from breakdown, chances to finally do those forgotten or pushed-aside projects, more time to spend with the one who loves us most – Jesus. I in no way make light of our current situation and the reality or severity of it, but I know a God in whom there is freedom from fear and who always works all things for the good of those who love him (Romans 8:28).



Surely - all over the world - the spirit is moving - helping churches to respond.

Faithful God,
who fulfilled the promises of Easter
by sending us your Holy Spirit
and opening to every race and nation
the way of life eternal:
open our lips by your Spirit,
that every tongue may tell of your glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rev Simon Woodley
May 31st 2020

If you have been moved to donate to help any of these situations or others like them, please see the USPG website - <https://www.uspg.org.uk> or the Church Mission Society site - <https://churchmissionsociety.org>