

THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS

BRIGHT HOPE NEWS



I don't know how you're feeling, but as I look out on the world at the moment, I confess some days I feel overwhelmed. I am grieved and angered by the immense challenges our partners and their communities are facing, and I've wrestled with how to make sense of it.

I know that it is not popular or comfortable to mention that there are dark forces at work in our world, but this is what we are up against. Perhaps sometimes we forget this and think things should be easier. As believers in a good, faithful, sovereign God we don't have to pretend that the unbearable things that happen in the world are somehow okay or that God is okay with it. We know God is not 'okay with it' because he sent Jesus into the world to defeat these powers and to bring life. The work of Jesus was, and is, about bringing freedom and joy and flourishing. The problem is, we still live in a time of tension, between the now and not yet. We live in a time of an inbreaking kingdom, and there is opposition.

We are allowed to feel like we are up against it. We are allowed to have moments of despair and overwhelm. We are allowed to cry out to God and wonder why it is taking Jesus so long to come back. We are allowed to wonder why there is so much suffering. But we do not linger here, we don't let it immobilise us. We have absolute confidence in where this story ends. We have a good, faithful, powerful God and he is going to put it all to right; that is our sure and certain hope.

So as best as I can figure, our job is to discern together what God is doing and keep throwing ourselves behind it. Regardless of how painful things get, no matter what the setbacks, failures, disasters or tragedies, because these things don't get the last word.

"...suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character, and character hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit..."
(Rom. 5:3-5)

Right now, our Bright Hope World team continues to prayerfully resource and support our partners as they faithfully continue their work in extremely challenging circumstances. It brings to mind what the Apostle Paul said of his ministry in the midst of adversity, "I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me" (Col 1:29). Paul prayed without ceasing and did not give up. He continued to work and struggle in God's strength. This is the strength we need too, because we don't just trust in the certainty of our future hope, we trust in the presence and work of God with our partners (and us), even when we can't quite see it.

Our Bright Hope World family stands in this together. Thank you for being prepared to share in the hard stories and for continuing to support our partners as they face immense challenges. Let's continue to pray and stay attuned to the ongoing and present ministry of Jesus by the Spirit – ministry that we know brings hope, transformation, and life, even in the hardest times. Together, we can look into the darkness and keep going with confidence and hope. Because we know, the light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.

Emma Stokes
Southeast Asia Partnership Facilitator

Have you been listening to our podcast lately?

We have interviewed a bunch of our partners in Pakistan, Lebanon, Egypt, India, Thailand and Nepal and given them the opportunity to tell their own stories in their own words.

Check them out. You will hear lots of stories of challenge and heartbreak, as well as some real encouragement and exciting moments of growth and impact. You will also hear how these places have been impacted by COVID and how far they are down the path of recovery.

If you're interested, listen via the link on the next page or via whatever service you use to listen to podcasts. Let us know what you think!

Speaking of our partners in far-flung places, we have been chatting a lot lately about when we might be able to visit some of them. The conversation is starting to sound a bit more positive and we are hoping some places will be able to be visited next year. As you might imagine, we are very keen to visit partners and check in with them, but need to ensure we can do so safely (and be able to return home to New Zealand!).

We can't wait to connect with our friends again.



Mrs Keresina has been a widow for over 30 years and cares for a number of her grandchildren. It has been her desire over the years to find a project that she could do to raise financial support, particularly for one of her grandsons whose parents died some years ago.

It was wonderful news to this old lady when she was told that a livestock project was coming to her village. She was one of the first people to be enrolled into this group and was very pleased to be involved.

She wanted her grandson to go to school like everyone else and she also wanted to be able to fend for herself and provide for her family.

Mrs Keresina wholeheartedly embraced the Mandiva Community Development project with both hands and it didn't take long for her to start experiencing increases in her livestock even though the conditions were harsh and not particularly conducive to growing chickens. She started selling the chicks and raised enough money for the school fees and uniform for her grandson.

When the roof of her house was blown away by Cyclone Idai she used her savings from selling chickens to repair the roof of her house. She was delighted that she did not need to ask the government or other organisations to help her but was able to do it herself.

It is a real privilege to be able to empower such vulnerable people, enabling them to stand on their own two feet and restoring their dignity.

Read more at <https://www.brighthopeworld.com/partnerships.asp?pid=366>

1. Pray that, even as the challenges in the West and – especially - in the developing world stretch on, we would stay strong in God and trust in Him. Pray as Emma suggests that we would “stay attuned to the ongoing and present ministry of Jesus by the Spirit – ministry that we know brings hope, transformation, and life, even in the hardest times”.
2. Pray for Mrs Keresina and all the other people being empowered through the livestock project in Mandiva in Zimbabwe.
3. Continue to pray for our partners in tough places mentioned in our last newsletter who are experiencing increasing violence and political instability in addition to the effects of COVID including Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Myanmar, and Pakistan.