

THE KINGDOM WAY

BRIGHT HOPE NEWS



We are living through a unique time in history. COVID-19 is the sort of event that will be recorded in textbooks for our children and grandchildren to study in years to come.

For the sake of our collective health as a nation, New Zealanders have changed our patterns of behaviour and the way we relate to one another. We have kept our distance, we have isolated, we have been wary of close contact and stayed in our homes. Ecclesiastes 3 has taken on a whole new meaning. "There is a time for every purpose under heaven a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing!"

This has made sense; however, my prayer is that this has indeed been a temporary change and does not become an embedded behaviour in the way we relate to each other. As followers of Jesus, our mandate is to be outwardly focused not inwardly, to be known by our love for and servant-heartedness towards others, especially those in need.

This has been exactly the pattern I've observed as the distinctive default of our Bright Hope World partners around the world. Faced with others in need, they have willingly shared what they have. Faced with scarce resources, they do not hoard, they share. We have received stories of partners who have been gathered together with their community and put all they have in the middle to share amongst those present. Precisely as the early church did!

For many of our partners, this time has provided an incredible open door for the gospel into their wider communities. In India especially, the lockdown has meant that millions of daily wage earners have found themselves without work in the cities, having to return to their villages on foot over many hundreds of kilometres, and unable to feed their families. The lockdown has been a government's choice to try to avoid death from COVID-19 perhaps at the risk of families dying of starvation. It's into this context that many of our Indian partners have been distributing food supplies to needy families. This connection has given them an open door into many families and the opportunity to share the Good News.

Providing for these felt needs has been the response of many of our partners around the world at this time. As the global church we have the opportunity to join together with them as family, in their response to the needs of those for whom this period of history leaves them literally hungry, thirsty and without basic needs.

Our human instinct is to pull away and isolate. To protect ourselves. But this is not the Kingdom way. Jesus moved towards others in time of need. He made himself present in the midst of suffering and difficulty. He took on the nature of a servant.

As some of us move towards less restrictive levels of choice in our countries, may we be inspired to reclaim the distinctives of an outwardly focused Jesus follower. The one we see lived out in the DNA of our Bright Hope World partners.

Nicky Rees-Thomas
Partnership Facilitator - India

As life gets back to normal in New Zealand, we are very mindful here of how COVID-19 is still unfolding in many of the areas where our partners live and work.

We are cautiously optimistic about the situation in much of Africa, but see the numbers in places like India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Afghanistan as a little more concerning.

We have been extremely encouraged by the generous response of so many of our supporters to our COVID-19 appeal. This has allowed us both to provide some relief in places where the situation is grave, as well as preparing to assist local economies to get back on their feet as lockdowns end.

It is our belief that many jobs will be lost, many crops will have failed and many loan programmes will have collapsed. We intend to be ready to help to restore these vital economic resources.

As we've also had a bit of downtime, we've taken the opportunity to rebrand our La Mai coffee (we needed to print labels anyway!) and refresh the website. We've also started a La Mai Facebook page to enable easier sharing of this wonderful product and ministry. Please check it out and tell your friends! Visit fb.com/lamaicoffeeenz.



The Good News Team spreads the good news of Jesus throughout Thailand, predominantly through correspondence courses aimed at children. Hundreds of thousands of children are learning about the hope that can be found in Jesus as they complete the courses and are encouraged in their faith by the Good News Team. Recently they received the letter below from a past student who is now 22 years old.

"I'm an old student of yours and wanted to say hello! Now I live in Pattaya and me and my husband do Christian children's ministry here. My grandparents still practice Buddhism and worship spirits but my parents have just received Jesus! They still have a lot to learn though. I'm so glad I studied with you and learned so much about God."

"I started your lessons when I was 11 years old, and I loved to ask questions. Such as, "is God real?" and "Where did Jesus go after he was risen from the grave?" Those questions helped me find God and his Son. If I hadn't studied then, I wouldn't have learned to love Jesus and wouldn't be serving God today!"

As well as Buddhist children, the Good News team also reaches out to Thailand's many Muslim students. They shared the following story with us recently:

"We got several new students from a school in a province South of Bangkok and Miew was marking their first lessons. One of them wrote that we shouldn't pray for her because she's a Muslim. We dug further and realized all these kids from this school were actually Muslims! They are taught that studying about Jesus is one of the worst sins one can commit; yet over 10 children/teens had done this first Bible lesson! Please pray for these young people and many others who would like to know about Jesus but face opposition. Pray for God's supernatural protection over them and guidance for us in this matter."

Read more at <https://www.brighthopeworld.com/partnerships.asp?pid=132>.

1. Pray that God would inspire us all based on the example set by the church in places like India. Pray that, as we return to normal, we would be spurred on to reach out into our communities and make a genuine kingdom difference.
2. Praise God that Africa has, so far, been spared the worst of COVID-19 and that there are some great success stories in how they have handled it.
3. Pray for the countries where the virus is starting to take hold and take lives. Pray for our partners there and for their ongoing ability to love, care for and support their communities sacrificially.
4. Pray for the Good News Team and the amazing work they are doing in Thailand. Pray that their tireless labour for the Gospel would be rewarded with a great harvest in a country that has been historically very resistant to God. Pray for those children that have received Christ but face persecution at home.

