

REACHING ACROSS THE DIVIDE

BRIGHT HOPE NEWS



I recently returned from a trip to the United States (see 'Bright Hope News' for the details on that!). I arrived into a country that appears to be tearing apart at the seams. After the deep divisions caused by differing approaches and beliefs about COVID response, and against the background of increasing political polarisation, the US seems a bit...tense. And on the horizon sits the upcoming Supreme Court decision on *Rose v Wade* and a potential sea change in how abortion laws are made in the future.

I visited a number of churches and Bright Hope World donor groups and was asked how the last two years have been for our partners in the field. Among some very encouraging signs and outcomes looms increasing persecution and intolerance of Christianity. I was also asked how things are in New Zealand, and again I found myself talking about political division, the relative absence of sincere and open dialogue, and many people taking more and more extreme positions as they throw stones at those who believe differently.

And I'm not sure how it is inside the church is terribly different from how it is outside. Doesn't it seem like everyone is a bit angry? A bit worked up? Sort of...sick of listening?

I am increasingly convinced and convicted that we need to find common ground with those who view the world differently, particularly if we are going to reach people with the Gospel. I see this with our partners, who often live as minorities among people that are sometimes violently opposed to their Christian beliefs. Instead of taking a rigid, combative stance, they open their hearts to other communities, look to find the things they have in common and work hard to understand other perspectives.

They seem to never take offence but instead reach out with love even when their hands are repeatedly slapped away. They work to support communities that hate them, believing that God is active and that the power of the Gospel can overcome whatever opposition they face. I see this with partners facing deep, traditional Animistic and Buddhist beliefs. I see this with people facing militant Islam or Hinduism. Though their lives are sometimes threatened, time and time again I see our partners willing to sit, drink tea or coffee, have a yarn and listen and learn.

Perhaps that's part of why people in the Majority World are seeing so many more people come to faith than we tend to.

Might we have something to learn here? Might we need to set aside our political views or even our deepest values – just for a little while – and listen to someone who thinks radically differently to us? Perhaps we have something to learn from them. Perhaps God can actually teach us something if we are willing to do so.

Fraser Scott

Executive Director

Our very first team member has successfully completed an international trip. Well, sort of successfully...

Our Executive Director Fraser Scott recently spent three weeks in the USA visiting supporters. It was a wonderful time of reconnection, sharing stories and catching up with faithful people who have continued to support our partners over a trying COVID period.

Unfortunately, two weeks into the trip, Fraser caught COVID! After isolating for the required time, he tested negative and emerged to continue meeting people, then tested positive again the day before he was due to go home!

A group of wonderful supporters in Vancouver, Washington, where Fraser was staying, rallied around to help him navigate the American health system in order to obtain a medical certificate saying he was fit to fly.

On the day he was due to fly out, he turned up at the airport, only to be told they wouldn't accept the certificate! Long story short, a fair bit of divine providence enabled Fraser to make it home after a very stressful trip.

So, on the whole, a productive trip, but it is still not easy to be travelling internationally!



Amina is a 22-year-old Syrian girl in Lebanon who was forced to get married five years ago to her cousin.

It was an arranged marriage for financial reasons. Her parents were in debt, and they felt that getting her to marry was the solution to their problems. This killed her from the inside.

Amina could not handle getting married at 16. Her body was not prepared enough for that. Her first-born child was sick from birth and needed continuous medication until he died at the age of three, apparently due to the lack of blood in his body.

There was nothing they could do because of a lack of money or insurance.

In the same year, her husband forced her to get pregnant again and at the age of 20, Amina had twins. One of them died during pregnancy and the other was born with leukaemia problems. He is being treated casually when they have some money, but not always.

The child is now 18 months old and needs lots of help to stay alive. Together for the Family Ministries (TFF) is trying their best to help, providing her with some vitamins, medicine, and milk, but the child needs surgery that cannot be afforded. This is such a difficult problem that is not easy to solve.

TFF consider it such a blessing to be able to help these young mothers in need and are excited that God has recently blessed them with a new property in order to be able to expand their ministry.

Read more at <https://www.brighthopeworld.com/partnerships.asp?pid=440>.

1. Pray for unity and openness generally, but especially within the church. Pray that God would enable us to overcome our differences and find ways to seek common ground. Pray that we would have the wisdom to know where to compromise and where to stand firm.
2. Pray for Amina, her son, and all the other young mothers being assisted by TFF in Lebanon. Praise for the provision of a new property and for wisdom as they look to expand their ministry.
3. Pray for God's protection over our team this year as we venture back out into the world, especially as travel is still far from easy in negotiating COVID requirements.
4. Praise that Fraser was able to undertake most of his meetings before getting sick, that he was well supported by caring friends and able to come home on time.

