

Mark Greenwood

Home (but not) Alone

June 2020

www.bmsworldmission.org/mgreenwood



Dear praying friends,

Well, it continues to be an interesting time we live through. Just after writing the April letter I learned that BMS were going to furlough some workers, but that it would be done in rotation. In our team of Overseas Team Leaders (OTLs) there are some of us who are taking three weeks each, and it was my turn from 4 May. In fact, I ended up having three and a bit weeks, due to the bank holidays in May. Consequently, I am a little out of touch with my team just now and need to have a speedy catch-up over the next seven days. Whilst away I was competently covered by Sarah and Aminta, colleagues who normally cover other strategic areas in our team. Next week it will be my turn to take on Sarah's responsibilities for three weeks!

During April the main task was coordinating with personnel and partner organisations in terms of their COVID-19 response. We needed to discuss which of their current programmes would continue through the pandemic, which would need to be suspended and what new actions would be necessary to help people deal with the crisis.

So, in Peru, for instance, the teaching for the pastors from Amazonian riverside communities in Nauta had to be suspended, but the fruit crops have still needed to be tended at the Nauta centre and the teaching at the Lima Seminary has been able to be continued online. Meanwhile, in both Lima and Nauta, as well as several other places around Peru, we have funded the Baptist Convention (CEBP) to provide food parcels to families who have lost all their income due to a very tight, police enforced lockdown and curfew. Over 50% of employment in Peru is in the informal sector (what in UK we might call the cash economy) and so many people have lost their livelihoods, either temporarily or, we pray not, permanently.

In Uganda some members of our team have been able to continue the agricultural work given that this is permissible, whereas other activities have had to be halted, such as visits to the Village Savings Groups. Part of the COVID-19 response there has been to boost the livelihoods support of the agricultural programme with further seed distribution, but also with food parcel distribution in the western region of Kasese, which in the last few weeks has had the added tragedy of floods to deal with.

Unfortunately, due to the awful civil unrest which has overtaken Guinea our couple there and almost all their colleagues from our partner mission had to leave the country. They will go back as soon as they are able, but it effectively means suspension of practically all their work. However, there is still some online English teaching happening for folk back there and we are planning to contribute to a solidarity fund, through the local equivalent of UCCF, for students stranded away from home with no studies or income.

As mentioned in my previous letter, in Mozambique a BMS mission worker has been able to coordinate the sewing of just under 32,000 masks for government hospitals. That was truly incredible and involved coordinating sewing teams from all around Maputo, the capital, with our Team Leader in Beira, whilst the worker herself was pulling the (mask) strings from UK, having returned due to the crisis. Most other activities in Mozambique have had to be suspended as they involved meetings and teaching in offices, courts or churches. Yet we have been able to provide for psycho-social support and hygiene education through churches and their pre-schools and some one-to-one legal services.

Meanwhile our partner organisations in Zimbabwe are working from home, carrying out their theological and community training programmes remotely.

For me, working from home and then furlough has not meant isolation, rather the opposite. It has definitely not felt lonely. Calls to mission personnel have increased in frequency, daily video prayer meetings, instead of around Arthur's desk, have kept our department in touch, and weekly online staff "coffee" for all of BMS UK staff mean we get to chat with other colleagues.

As a family we have enjoyed some wonderful cooking from all four family members and Suzana and I took the UK government's permission to have a daily outing for exercise as a mandate for getting into a new routine of actually doing some daily exercise outside! The kilos (or pounds, if you prefer) are being shed. We have seen some new places near home we hadn't seen before and some magnificent displays of God's creativity, such as this year's horse chestnut blossom (see photo).

And then there has been the opportunity to reflect more on God's word through remote home-group, online church, YouTube sermons and more time dedicated to reading. Being more conscious of God's presence certainly has made us aware that we are not "home alone".

We are, of course, aware that for many the lockdown has not been an enriching experience, quite to the contrary - some have had tragedy, loneliness and frustration. Nevertheless, it is our prayer that you will have been keenly aware of God's presence with you through all the challenges or joys that these changed times have brought.

In our readings together, Suzana and I have been going through the book of Revelation. Time and again it is clear in those pages that through all the struggles, battles, political turmoils, financial challenges, cataclysms and spiritual attacks of life, those who are in Christ will have victory over their struggles.

May that victory be ours, yours and for all those we work with.



As we pray for you, thank you for your prayerful support for all the people and situations mentioned here.

Yours,

Mark

If you would like to support Mark Greenwood by prayer and committed regular giving, visit bmsworldmission.org/partners or call 01235 517617 for a 24:7 Partners leaflet.



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