



Bob & Brenda Bagley

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COVID Concerns & Thankfulness

It's amazing to reflect on how much the world has changed from one year ago. And not just the world - our lives and your life has changed too. How comforting to know that our lives are in the hands of the changeless one!

Recently a missionary from another organization wrote about his worries and blessings at this point in the pandemic. We thought we'd borrow his idea and share seven things that concern us and ten things we're really thankful for.

Seven Things We're Concerned About

1. Local Churches Around the Globe

We are concerned that churches will find that the challenge of ministry will be overwhelming without access to the technology that we take for granted. We are concerned that churches in poor communities will be unable to provide what is needed in order to reopen under stringent government guidelines.

2. Support Levels

What does the economic impact of COVID-19 mean for missionaries on support? For us? Will donations begin to dry up? How will new missionaries just starting out be able to develop a support base in the current climate?

3. Lost Momentum

We are concerned that we will lose momentum on important initiatives that were just gaining headway — such

as restructuring ministries in Africa, the sending of new missionaries from countries which had never sent before, and refocusing ministry in French-speaking countries. What actions are we leaving undone because we're simply trying to figure out how to make things work from home and wondering how priorities have shifted?

4. The New Normal

In the missions world, as elsewhere, there is an increasing desire to get back to “normal”. But maybe this is time to rethink what is normal and redirect our energies in fresh new ways. We are concerned that we might miss the opportunity to chart new paths for kingdom work.

5. Rising Persecution

It seems that Satan is attacking believers and the church with renewed determination in the past few months. For example, attacks by Islamic forces in northern Mozambique have sent Christians fleeing for their lives (. China has increased its efforts to crack down on Christians, Turkey has recently converted several historic Christian churches into mosques.

6. Family Needs

We are concerned about the wellbeing of our children and grandchildren during this time. Our son Joshua lost his job early into this crisis and with the end of the extra unemployment help is now getting more desperate to find a way to support his family. Our daughters, Tracy in Korea and Mary Beth in Indiana, live on their own and so are doubly isolated.

7. Lessons Unlearned

We're a little concerned that we won't learn the lessons God is wanting to teach us during these days.

Ten Things We're Thankful For

1. This Chance to Connect

We confess that we are not as faithful in writing newsletters as we should be. But, we are very grateful for the host of people who are interested in our lives and ministry and who read what we write and then talk to the Lord about it.

2. A Break from Travel

We expected to relocate to the US five months ago, but then we had a busy travel schedule ahead of us. A break from that schedule has given us a window of time to get settled in and begin making South Carolina feel like home. That's even included getting a vegetable garden started and enjoying produce from our own back yard!

3. Another Skipped Winter

We left South Africa at the end of March when their autumn was beginning and spring was starting in South Carolina. We skipped winter again! That's a blessing not to be overlooked!

4. Fast Reliable Internet

One of the specific tools for which we're thankful is fast reliable internet. Such is not the case in many parts of the world. So many things are easier than they might be. So much information is closer than it used to be. And we can connect with church leaders and missionaries in far-off places all over the globe.

5. GP COVID Relief Fund

Through the generous gifts of individuals and churches, GP was able to set up a relief fund to assist Wesleyans around the world facing the economic impact of lock downs. The fund is now being used to help churches with the expenses (digital thermometers, face masks, hand sanitizer, etc.) of meeting regulations, allowing them to reopen for services.

6. Facilitator M Initiative

One of the assignments in Bob's new assignment is to help provide on-going training for missionaries in mature fields. The COVID lock down provided an opportunity to launch "The Facilitator M Initiative" to provide a variety of resources and opportunities to these missionaries. Bob is especially grateful for a team of missionaries who have worked with him to bring this to a reality.

7. Muslim Ministry Lessons

Brenda is grateful for an opportunity to provide lessons to Wesleyan leaders in southern Africa on ministering to Muslims. She makes an audio recording of her lessons which are then distributed to leaders via Whatsapp. We are grateful to have an ongoing impact and influence.

8. A God Who's with Us

We're grateful that God's presence is not restricted by Covid-19 or government restrictions. In the words of a song sung by Kari Jobe: "When I walk through deep waters I know that You will be with me. When I'm standing in the fire I will not be overcome. Through the valley of the shadow I will not fear. I am not alone. I am not alone. You will go before me. You will never leave me."

9. A God Who's Got This

We're grateful God was not taken by surprise by the events facing each of us right now. Nor is He overwhelmed by it all. "Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save nor his ear too dull to hear." Isa. 59:1 (NIV)

10. You, Saints

Finally, we're thankful for you; happy that we can share this tiny glimpse into our lives. The phrase "we're in this together" seems overused — but, we are indeed grateful that you are in this with us. Thanks for your support — in prayer and giving.