

Mission News and Prayer Letter

Wonersh Church

Autumn 2020

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father Son and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I am surely with you to the very end of the age. **Matthew 28:19**

Viva and Mim Friday— an update from Uganda

Uganda still has relatively few deaths reported as a result of COVID-19 compared to many countries. The reported deaths will only be those who were already known to have had the virus. But the sad truth is that there is simply not a great proportion of people who are in the older generations, or who are sick...they have already died. This is the sad reality!

There are minimal restrictions now as the President is trying to balance the pressure on the health services with the need to keep millions of people from sliding back into abject poverty. The economy has experienced a slowdown in growth due to COVID-19, a locust invasion and flooding caused by heavy rains. Uganda's GDP growth in 2020 is projected to be between 0.4 and 1.7% compared to 5.6% in 2019.

This is why the network has to keep working – we are working with some of the poorest of the poor children, and they have been hit hard from the 3-month lockdown earlier in the year. Most savings groups used all their savings to survive. Small micro-enterprises have been hit hard. We are trying to help them to rebuild.

Schools are going to remain closed until April or May next year, except for the examination classes. That means that 13.8 million of 15 million children will remain out of school.

We are trying to reach as many of the network's children as possible with learning materials. Radios that the government promised every household for a home learning programme are still to be delivered. One of the expected impact of the year out of school is that there will be a baby boom early next year from child mothers. This will mean many girls are going to find it harder to return to school. Other children who have had to work to help with household chores and businesses will also find it hard to get back to school.

Please pray that the Government has wisdom in how to handle the situation. We also pray for social stability as Presidential elections are due next February, and they are always a bit chaotic.

And please pray for Viva Africa as we seek to support the CRANE network as they reach out to children through the churches, schools and organisations within the network.

What is your perspective on Mission?

As you will know, the Mission Committee are responsible for stewarding our relationships with our key Mission Partners, and therefore the news we share is focussed on Mission Partner news. We know, however that as a church family our heart for mission is broader, deeper and more far reaching than our 5 Mission Partners. Of course!

So we wanted to HEAR from YOU! We have two questions for you:

- Which organisations are close to your heart? Which ministries you follow and pray for? We would like to compile a list of all the organisations, ministries and activities that we as a church are involved with or connected with outside our usual ministries and Mission Partners, as an encouragement and inspiration to all of us.
- **What does mission mean to you in your daily life?**
We would love to hear the range of perspectives and we will feedback what we hear in a Take Five at some point!

If you would like to respond to these questions, please email Caroline on carolinestearman@outlook.com.

Ema and Viorel Tulpan

Ema and Viorel send a brief update for us this autumn—they send their thanks for our prayers earlier in the year for Viorel who has recovered well from Covid-19 with no long term symptoms.

The church continues to operate albeit with social distancing and shorter services. The youth group for young men cannot meet at the moment due to limitations on space, there is not a suitable venue for social distancing.

Caleb has celebrated his 18th birthday and started his final year of school, while Levi has begun his first year of senior school.

Charlotte R—WH

The WH team in Wales continue to work from home as the Centre has remained closed, and I am very happy to be with Mum (Chris) in Bramley. Living with Mum again after all these years is a lovely gift from the Lord. It is especially precious to pray, worship and grow together in the Lord.

Short-Term Placements Over recent months I have worked on applications. The doors didn't open for overseas placements, but a number of applications have been processed now so that people will be able to go and serve when the doors do open. A new development is that students who have online courses are now able to take a placement with WH refugee ministries in Liverpool, Luton or Swansea: part-time ministry / part-time study (when local restrictions allow!)

In WH International we are very grateful that the Lord led us last year to reshape our structure through a new international leadership. Now we see that He was preparing us for 2020! We have discovered that God hasn't put a pause on The Great Commission while there is a pandemic! He is working His purposes out in the nations and it is a great privilege to be a part of what He is doing *"for such a time as this"*. About half of WH international workers remained in the field, and have been very grateful to you and all those who have been praying.

In the UK it has been widely reported that many people are hungry spiritually and that courses like Alpha have seen exciting growth in numbers attending and people coming to faith. Likewise WH international workers report a clear increase in spiritual hunger and openness. We have found the AM course (similar to Alpha) phenomenally fruitful over the last 10 years. (Originally written in Arabic in 2008, AM is now in 29 languages, used in 50 countries and 1000s of people have become Christians!) Between March and July, we delivered 40 trainings (mostly online!) around the world reaching over 650 trainees. The testimonies are amazing!

Of course the trauma and hunger caused by Covid has been huge. Here are two examples of practical help: - **One of the WH teams in South Asia** identified 52 most needy families in the nearest slum community. Donations enabled them to give regular 22kg packages of rice, flour, beans, oil, potatoes, onions and soap. They were also able to help local pastors in least-reached villages and mountain areas.

The WH Liverpool team were counted as key workers. Since March they contacted & offered help to approximately 750 asylum seekers and refugees; provided care packages (food, cleaning products & toiletries) to 251 individuals within 103 households; provided 100 mobile top ups; online support groups to 60 people; helped with specific needs (baby items, maternity wear, clothes, shoes,

Bishop Sospeter in Tanzania

One of our long term friends and who has a particular link with the Thursday congregation is Bishop Sospeter in Kibondo Diocese in the west of Tanzania.



The Bishop has been busy visiting parishes for confirmation services and recently confirmed 66 people at the cathedral church. These are encouraging signs that the church in Tanzania continues to thrive and grow.

In a recent inauguration of a new deanery in the Diocese the Bishop was given a gift of a cow! Perhaps we should consider how we welcome our new vicar to Wonerh Church next year....

June 2021 brings with it the Diocesan synod, so please do pray for them as they prepare for this. Elice, formerly the diocesan accountant, has been very seriously ill and we are pleased to know that she is now much better and is recuperating back at home.

The Diocese continues to work on the completion of the health centre, currently building a mortuary and incinerator.

The rains are just starting and they are praying for a good season again this year. Thankfully Tanzania is not suffering the impact of the pandemic and all schools and colleges have been back to normal since July.

The Bishop and his family celebrated the wedding of their eldest daughter in September, and his wife Betty is in a better position health wise than she has been for a while.



YMCA DownsLink

Hear from some of the YMCA young people directly about the difference living in YMCA accommodation has made to their lives:

<https://youtu.be/8qrcyBTHhwM>

Some reflections and statistics on the impact of Covid-19 seen by the YMCA over recent months...

Family breakdown is one of the leading causes of youth homelessness and pressure created by COVID-19 has drastically increased the number of vulnerable young people presenting as homeless in Sussex and Surrey. In addition, job losses, poor mental health and substance misuse, all exacerbated by the Covid-19 crisis, have been contributing factors. As the largest youth homelessness charity in the South East, at the start of the pandemic we saw a significant rise in the number of young people presenting as homeless, with a 61% increase on the year before.

The dramatic increase in requests for help from our family mediation service is evidence of the pressure many families are under due to both the lockdowns and social restrictions. For the first time in three years, we are seeing long waiting lists for family mediation. We've witnessed an almost 100% increase in the numbers of young people and families requesting mediation in the last five months alone.

Throughout lockdown and the summer, we've kept all of our accommodation projects and advice services open and we continue to house over 763 vulnerable young people every night. Within these services we have also seen an increase in referral requests for support with mental health issues in the last six months. We have also seen a 45% increase in safeguarding alerts

Another area that has impacted vulnerable young people is access to training, employment and education. Opportunities to move on into college placements and other training opportunities have dried up. Many young people, particularly in transitional housing (i.e. building skills to live independently) have lost their jobs within the gig economy. Since March, Brighton and Hove claimants for universal credit aged between 16 – 24 have trebled from 1,000 to 3,000 (Job Centre plus).

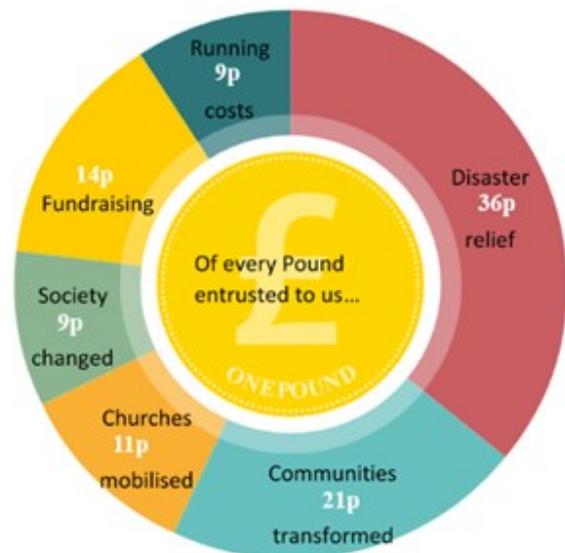
Susie says... 'YMCA DownsLink Group have helped me tremendously – with food banks, rent management, social group clubs and one-to-one sessions to talk to a professional about my mental state. They have been there for everything I needed. We all take for granted having constant support, until it's no longer there. It's a blessing to have someone look out for you and it makes life that much easier everyday.'

Tearfund

Tearfund have recently published their Annual Report, so if you are interested in more detail about the organisation, or reading any more stories of their work, feel free to browse the links below. A snapshot of the allocation of donations received is below in the chart.

https://www.tearfund.org/about_us/annual_report/

https://www.tearfund.org/inspired_individuals/stories/



One specific example of recent work that Tearfund has been engaged in is in Mozambique. Mozambique is No. 181 in the Human Development Index, out of a total of 188 countries. One of the poorest in the world.

Extreme violence has intensified in northern Mozambique between the Government and opposition forces over the last few weeks. Many people have abandoned their homes to seek refuge, and are now living in camps. The situation is critical.

Tearfund is working with two local partners to help those most affected, providing shelter, clean water and other necessities that these families need to live with dignity. There have also been concerning reports of women and children being attacked or abused in the camps.

- Pray for people whose lives have been torn apart by this crisis. Pray for God's comfort and protection – especially over women and children.
- Pray for wisdom for Tearfund and our partners as we respond. Pray that we will reach those in need.
- Pray for peace in northern Mozambique.

Members of the Mission Committee are: Caroline Stearman, Alex Vinall, Keith Bateson, Liz Tilley, Jane Boswell and Nick Bamber. Please do get in touch if you want to find out more about our Mission Partners or Giving.