

*Sharing Christ's Compassion for Ukraine and beyond*  
*And behold, there was a great earthquake,*  
*for an angel of the Lord descended...the guards shook for fear of him...*  
*But the angel said..., "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus..."*

Matthew 28:2-5

November 15, 2020

Dear Prayer Partners,

2020 is surely a year that will live in infamy! Don't we see many around us shaking with fear? But we do not need to be afraid because we seek Jesus! In the midst of a pandemic, we seek the Great Physician! Surrounded by anxiety and depression, we seek our Risen Savior and Lord who conquered death and sin! What a great God we serve! I continue to beg Him for wisdom and insight in dealing with the effects of the pandemic on our ABWE missionaries globally and on our International Headquarters in PA. Some are stuck in the US and cannot return to their field of service. Some are on the field but cannot get healthcare. Some want to know how to safely help others. Some need help find testing for COVID before they can fly overseas. Others need a health certificate to prove they do not have symptoms of COVID-19. I have been sending out periodic updates to the entire ABWE family, trying to ferret out the truth concerning the virus amongst all the media "fake news". That takes a huge investment of time and research. Of course, with a new virus, we are constantly learning about it, changing previous reports, understanding more in-depth with time and experience, patiently sifting through data to find what has been verified by replication in different labs.

Here are some excerpts from missionaries' emails to me:

*"Keep praying--even our town hearing we have covid here in Goroka has not changed behavior of social distancing and taking precautions. People don't seem to care too much about that until we see people dying, I guess. Pray for God to give wisdom on how to use this for an outreach of the Gospel."*

*"I contacted QuestDirect, and after talking to 4 different people, I learned they could not guarantee 24-48 hours for results, AND the 24-48 hours does not include transit time, nor does it include the 3-5 business days before posting results to the website. So that one does not seem to be a great option with a deadline of 5 days".*

*"I made it through without developing symptoms. And negative PCR tests, so that is good news. Literally the day I get out of quarantine, my kids were exposed to a classmate (there is a total of 3 kids in their class) and we found out about it three days later. So our youngest 2 are wearing masks around the house, and can't leave the home for 14 days from exposure".*

*"Are you still the person I would write to with my medical questions, or do you have others covering inquiries right now? (I remember that you were so swamped a few months ago that you had directed me to some other people for minor questions.)"*

*"Thank you for this update. News/updates are coming more slowly these day after the initial ignorance and panic, so it's good to hear about how the data is being boiled down now".*

*"We cannot travel or go to the park. Penalties for even smaller disobedience by 'quarantine violators' like not wearing a face mask, are P5000/\$25. That is a lot of money in the Philippines. Those caught out after curfew, 9 pm to 4 am, might be held at the police station and fined. In Manila and some areas, they try shaming people by having them pick up trash along the highway".*

*"Thank you for investing the time in developing your email communication. It was informative and easy to understand. I'm sure many people were put at ease about testing concerns and protocol because of your communication".*

*"As you're probably aware Covid-19 in Europe is exploding. Ukraine is no different, reporting their all-time highest number of new cases today of 11,057 (Nov 12). There are now 200 cities and townships designated as "red zone." This means no public transportation to or from these cities and the local hospital beds are 75% occupied or higher. The balance of Ukraine is considered as "orange zone," which means beds are 50-75% full. With the exception of pregnancies, hospitals are only taking Covid-19 related patients and are doing no surgeries. Ukraine yesterday has enforced a nationwide quarantine for weekends, including no public transportation and all public meeting places closed. Those breaking Covid-19 regulations are no longer just fined but can be imprisoned for up to three years".*

I was planning to go to Ukraine in September, but of course, that trip was cancelled. Now I am hoping for April 2021, but even that is in doubt. The Lord knows! Pray for His guidance.

I have 7 different folders in Outlook where I archive email concerning COVID-19. I serve on the ABWE Crisis Management Team, and I occasionally get pulled into Senior Leadership Team meetings (ABWE President and 4 VP's). I have about 2700 emails archived in those folders plus who knows how many still in my general inbox! And I do still get many health questions unrelated to COVID. It has been quite a year! Still my favorite thing to do is talk to a missionary by phone or online meeting, listen to their concerns, discern their symptoms, figure out the health issue involved, and give them advice for their next steps.

I had been helping one missionary understand and deal with issues surrounding her cancer diagnosis for a year or so. I encouraged her to return to the US for evaluation because of some concerns I had about her treatment overseas. I also saw signs of terminal spread of the cancer that her oncologist there did not seem to address or discuss. She and her husband agreed to come home, and I compiled her documents into a referral and set up an appointment with an oncologist in their US city. This specialist made the appropriate diagnosis, relieved her symptoms, but also called in Hospice. A month later she was in Heaven, but she rejoiced to see all her family in the US before going to see Jesus. Walking with God's servants through a valley of illness, whether to healing or to Heaven, is my calling and reward.

A great joy last week was doing medical interviews with many of our newly hired missionaries during their week of orientation (sitting 6 feet away from each other of course!). 16 were appointed to overseas locations. I assess their health issues to decide whether they need to live in a country that has excellent healthcare. We are spoiled in the US with access to the best healthcare in the world!

Monday I will do medical interviews with those in Field Prep Seminar who are going overseas. This seminar is for new missionaries who have at least 75% of their support and are getting ready for the next big adventure, deploying to their field as new missionaries. Many have already served short-term, but there is a huge difference in adaptation between living overseas and visiting overseas.

This letter is much longer than usual! But it has been 5 months since the last letter, and I was eager to share with you what God is doing through your prayers and support. Thank you for continuing to stand with me in my new ministry that assists missionaries around the world to fulfill Jesus' Great Commission.

I look forward to visiting my brother Tom and his family in Greenville SC over Thanksgiving. Though family gatherings may be much smaller this year, our thanksgiving will be greater for God seeing us through this pandemic, enabling us to trust Him without fear, knowing that HE is Sovereign King of the Universe, and is working out His plan that we cannot see or understand. May you have a wonderful Thanksgiving, rejoicing in your salvation, glorifying God in your fellowship, choosing to be thankful despite the chaos around us. He is worthy of our trust!

***Clinging to The Rock,  
Miriam Wheeler, MD***

ABWE Medical Director and ABWE-Ukraine Medical Ministry Founder