

ISM^{inc} *Doorstep* News

MAY/JUNE 2020
VOLUME 24/ISSUE 3
SERVING INTERNATIONALS
ON CAMPUS

UNWAVERING HOPE

JUDY TANG, DIRECTOR
INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF WI-MADISON

“On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand.”

Where is God when things are tough? Where is God when my _____ (health, job, finances, relationships, home, kids, etc.) is uncertain? Where is God when things seem out of control?

GOD IS HERE! It's one thing to say these words... but a whole different thing to believe these words. Do you believe that God is here... during a pandemic, during sickness, during time of distress, during troubling relationships, during a financial crisis? “The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” (Deuteronomy 31:8) “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)

How can we not be afraid or be discouraged when our world or my world seems to be spiraling out of control? We turn our eyes to the truth in God's Word, trusting in what God promises for us. This could be a time of testing our faith. This could be a time a being thankful in all circumstances. This could be a time of actively praying for one another. This could be a time of loving our neighbor. This could be a time of connecting in new ways. We know that God will never leave us or forsake. We know that the Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts of those who have faith in Jesus. We know that Jesus has defeated Satan, sin, and death. We know that we have nothing to fear because Christ is with us!

In John 16, Jesus tells his disciples that he will be going away, that the Spirit will guide them in truth, and that their grief will be turned to joy. He concludes the chapter with v. 33, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” Jesus has overcome the world and even in the midst of trials and sorrows, he can, does, and will

give us peace!

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:13

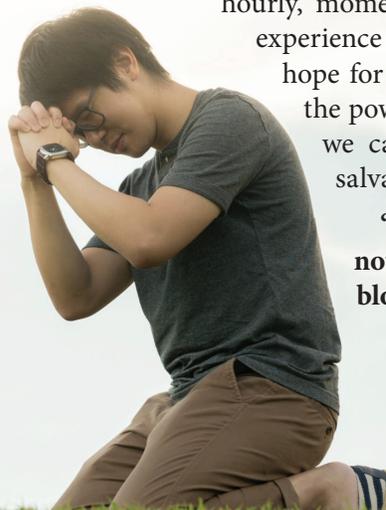
“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6-7

“Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.” Hebrews 10:23-25

No matter what is happening in our lives, God is here. “Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

(Hebrews 12:2) Turning to God's Word daily, hourly, moment by moment, we can experience God's peace and have hope for today. Jesus' conquered the power of sin and death and we can be confident of our salvation and our future.

“Our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness”



My hope is Built on Nothing Less
by Edward Mote (1834)

KEEPING IN TOUCH

LIZ BEIKMANN-ISM COORDINATOR
ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN, KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

It was early afternoon in late March when the phone rang. Checking the caller ID, I saw it was a number from the Czech Republic. When I answered, I learned the caller was Petr, a former exchange student to KSU from Prague. He was one of three that first year of the exchange, 1996.

It was 24 years ago that I began working with ISM at St. Luke's Lutheran in Manhattan, KS. Working in partnership with HIS (Helping International Students) people were assigned as a friend to an international student if they had requested one. We were assigned a student from the Czech Republic. Over the past 24 years we have hosted or been a friend to over 50 students, mostly Czechs.

That first student was Jan, after sharing several meals at our house he informed us that there were 2 other Czech students at KSU and they did not have an American friend. He asked if they could come with him when he came to our home. Of course we said yes. So we got to know Jan, Petr and Marcel.

We have visited Prague a number of times and seen Jan and Petr, met their spouses and kids and parents. They keep in touch. Marcel married an American and lives in Kansas City.

With the current health crisis it has been amazing the number of students who have contacted us to ask if we are ok, and in some cases give us advice on what to do to remain safe and healthy. The most exciting communication came when we got that phone call from Petr saying he was calling from Czech Republic. He was

just checking up on us to make sure we were ok in the midst of this health crisis. Even though we met 24 years ago he was still concerned. That phone call made our day.

One of the most amazing things is that even though most of these former students had told us they were atheists in each recent email or phone call regarding the health crisis they said they were praying for us.

As the ISM Coordinator for St. Luke's, I coordinate a number of families who have been and are currently American friends to the Czech exchange students. A number of them have told me that they also are getting emails, phone calls, and Skype calls from some of their former students.

A lot of the time one does not know if we have made a difference or not, but I think this is a testament that shows this ministry does make a difference.



A picnic at host family's home in 1996 with the first exchange students from Prague. On left side of table: Petr, Elaine, Jan. On right side of table: Marcel, Howard, and Liz on the end.

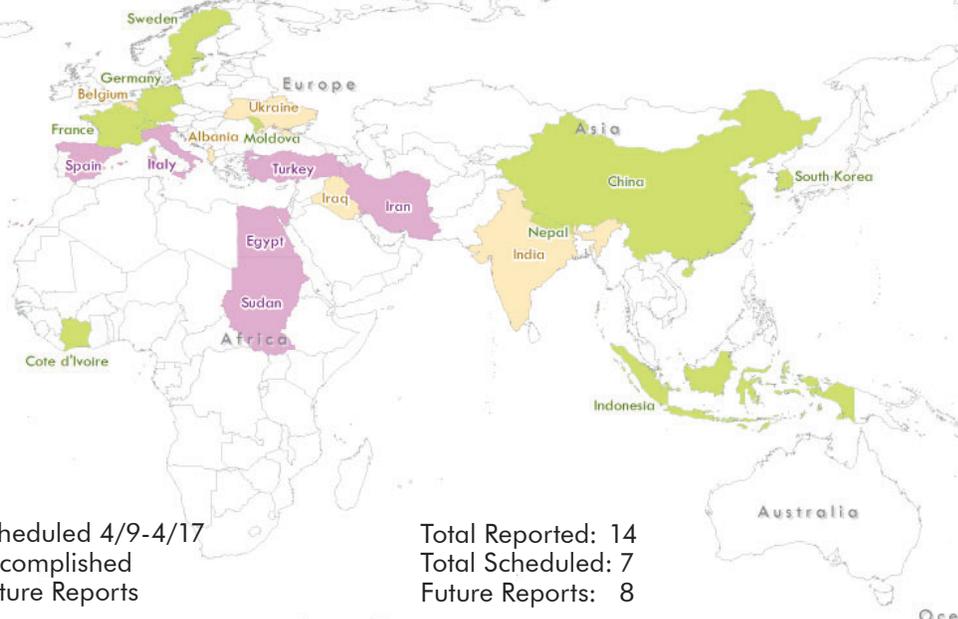
CONNECTION

FRIENDSHIP HOUSE MSU GOES ONLINE

RICH BEARUP - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
FRIENDSHIP HOUSE - MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY



- Scheduled 4/9-4/17
- Accomplished
- Future Reports



When Michigan State University (MSU) cancelled in-person classes on March 11 in favor of online classes, that was our cue: take our Bible study and ESL classes online as rapidly as possible.

Because MSU transitioned to the Zoom platform for its online classes, that also decided for us which platform to use. Our students' university-based study would be conditioned to Zoom, so it only made sense for us to use Zoom as well.

Initially, many of our nearly sixty volunteer teachers balked at the notion of teaching online courses for a range of reasons: a desire to look after and hunker down with family, doubt about technology, a simple preference for being in the same room with their students, and even a basic need to take a break.

Recruiting replacement teachers became a priority. Many of our former teachers and other educators with a professional background in teaching English Language Learners answered our call. After several days, several of our current teachers decided that teaching online classes was worth trying. Training was offered to all of our teachers in how to use Zoom, its nuances, strengths and vulnerabilities. Most of that training took the form of one-on-one Zoom tutorials until teachers became more confident and adept.

Not quite a month has passed since we made the decision to go online. We are now fielding 23 weekly online ESL and Bible study classes. Additional ESL and Bible classes are in development and just about ready to join the schedule.

For now, we are planning on doing online classes through the end of May. When local government and public health authorities give us a clear "go ahead" sign, we will begin resuming in-person classes into the summer. But we will, for sure, continue to offer online classes even after Covid19 begins to decline (we pray and hope) for a variety of reasons:

1. We are reaching former International students now back in their home countries
2. Some of our current International students in East Lansing prefer online classes
3. Graduate International students on campus all day have more flexibility in the evening hours and on weekends when we can schedule online classes
4. Some of our teachers have expressed interest in continuing with online classes via the Friendship House Zoom account, our Facebook page, our website (currently under redesign) and our YouTube channel).

One innovation we began as MSU cancelled in-person classes was to have former Friendship House students back in their home countries give live online Zoom reports about Covid19 in their nation. We have done fifteen of these reports and another fifteen have been scheduled for the coming days. We are able, with the reporter's permission, to stream their report live on our Facebook page which also records the presentation for others to watch later. I am deeply impressed by the amount of preparation these folks have done and how well received their reports are. On average, these reports are being viewed by hundreds of people around the USA and the world.

Above is a map, created by one of our current students, Pradip (Nepal) which shows those countries already reporting and those which are coming up.

Our prayers are with all ISM, Inc. affiliates. May all of you be healthy and stay that way. May all of you reconnect with the hope and joy that is Easter. God bless!



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

PASTOR MARK MEYER
LUTHERAN CHAPEL-UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

One of the communities that we have connected well with here at the Chapel in Lincoln, NE, has been the Bengali community. We initially met a few students in the Bengali community by offering free moving help. Before the Covid-19 outbreak, they would regularly use our building for birthday parties, baby showers and celebrating national holidays. These conversations opened the door for several spiritual conversations and specific opportunities to serve. We have been able to offer free baby items like clothes, diapers, and wipes to their new parents. We are in the process of starting an online conversation group for many of the wives who are at home.

We also introduced the idea of a Cultural Ambassador. A Cultural Ambassador is a student who picks a culture to invest in. Henry is a Christian student from Ecuador who is the Cultural Ambassador for the Bengali community. He will help make sure they know where everything is in the kitchen and where the cleaning supplies are. His most important job though is praying for these students, building relationships, and having conversations about Jesus when the opportunity is there. We are excited to see what God does through these friendships and what doors He will open.



ZOOMING FORWARD WITH ENGLISH CLASSES AND BIBLE STUDIES

JUDY TANG, DIRECTOR
INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF WI-MADISON



The International Friendship Center (IFC) in Madison, WI is “zooming” forward! In this time of social distancing, we are still connecting! The IFC has moved classes from in-person to online using Zoom. Using this technology we can still “see” each other, connect, share, talk, and learn together. Currently we offer 8 classes each week, plus times to drop in, meet one-on-one, and meet in small groups. This platform has encouraged students who have returned to their countries to join IFC classes and reconnect with us!

E-MAIL: ISMINC@ISMINC.ORG

WEB SITE: WWW.ISMINC.ORG

FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/ISMCOMMUNITY

ISM inc

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MINISTRY, INC
PO BOX 22
STEVENS POINT, WI 54481-0022

*Doorstep*News

THE DOORSTEP IS THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION
OF ISM, INC., A RECOGNIZED SERVICE
ORGANIZATION OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—
MISSOURI SYNOD, DEDICATED TO MINISTRY
AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS.

MAY/JUNE 2020

VOLUME 24/ISSUE 3