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March 28, 2020

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Dear Friends,

Today, I am having difficulty finding words to start this letter. We have all been immersed in the new realities of life with COVID-19. You know the story, you've heard the tragedy, you are praying. I want to encourage you to read Isaiah 26 and 27. As the Lord said in 27, he did not punish Israel as he punished her enemies, but he exiled her to call her to account, to take away her sin. (vv.7-9) May the Lord use this crisis to call the church to account and to prepare us to be the Body of Christ anointed for service.

March 9-13, we were in Colorado for spring break. We watched the news and saw that in the 5 counties around us, people were testing positive for the virus. By the time we made it home on the 15<sup>th</sup>, all the ski slopes had been closed.

Frankly, we had been like many other Americans, thinking that the entire situation was overblown, but the reality of it all began to sink in. With schools closed, PREP (our youth outreach) was closed, too. All of our spring rental events at the Storehouse were cancelled. Income dried up immediately, but we had a pantry full of food. What to do? What do Christians do when they see need and have 5 loaves and 2 fish? They pray, break bread, start handing it out, and God provides.

On Monday, March 16, we decided to provide meals for the elderly who had no one to help them. We inventoried the pantry, decided on a menu, organized the assembly line, and on Thursday, March 19, our staff came in to help us cook enough for 21 people, providing enough for one meal a day for four days.

We decided to cook 3 meals on Mondays and 4 on Thursdays. Lori shopped for meat that weekend, with money we didn't have, and the very next day, the house mother of Alpha Delta Pi sorority called to ask if we wanted all of the food from their pantry and freezer. The loaves and fish were multiplying!

By the following Monday, March 23, we had 61 people on the list. By the 26<sup>th</sup>, it was up to 74, and as I write this today, we are inching over 80 precious souls who need someone to come by with food for their bellies and a smile for their lonely hearts.



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The local CBS affiliate, WCBI, came to film and interview us, and even more people called for help and to donate or volunteer. We have been overwhelmed by the generosity of our community and are now providing over 550 meals per week! We will keep it up as long as there is need and provision.



**Our partners in Nigeria, Nepal, India, and Pakistan are facing much more dire circumstances.** They work among the poorest of the poor, who already lived, quite literally, from one meal to the next. In India, the government issued a nationwide shutdown without warning. No one could stockpile anything, even if they had the means to do so. And if they ventured out to find food for their families, police would beat them with rods.

Joel Kumar, Ghuna's son, in India, sent this message yesterday (3/27): *"Food packets are being prepared and distributed [by Gospel Friends]. (And we knew from a previous post that the police were actually helping by escorting them as they went out.) We are planning to distribute milk, too. People going out to buy milk and basic necessities are being beaten by cops using bamboo sticks, to return home. There is no vaccine and no cure. It'll be a calamity when the virus spreads. The lockdown is devastating the poor and the weak. Continue to pray for this situation and the needs to be met."*



We are laying it all on the table, putting our trust in God for provision to help others and to meet our own needs. It's tough to see now how we will be able to pay our salaries, but thousands in our neighborhood and billions around the world are truly facing desperate need.



I beseech you – if God has blessed you, and He has; if you have any reserves; if your heart is touched by the needs around you – PRAY! Pray the prayer of faith! Get on your face before the Lord and cry out, like these women of the Methodist Church Nigeria.

GIVE! Give generously and sacrificially! The time is now for the church to rise up and be the people God has called us to be. God knows our needs and he will provide for us.

I turned 60 on March 27, and I can proclaim with King David, full of faith:

*"Once I was young, and now I am old. Yet I have never seen the godly abandoned or their children begging for bread. The godly always give generously to others, and their children are a blessing."* Psalm 37:25-26

Be of good courage!

Love in Christ,  
Lee Ann, Lori, and the CWM Staff

*"Be strong and take courage! Do not be afraid or discouraged! For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."*  
Joshua 1:9