

# ST. MATTHEWS LUTHERAN CHURCH ESKO, MN

*A family of believers grounded in, growing in and reaching out in Christ*

## **ADDRESS:**

St. Matthews Lutheran Church  
Four Elizabeth Ave.  
Esko, MN 55733

## **CONTACT US:**

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Email - [stmatthesko@aol.com](mailto:stmatthesko@aol.com)  
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## **OUR PASTORS:**

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## **OUR STAFF:**

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Brenda Hall, Office Manager  
Rebecca Bauer, Secretary

## **Life in the Midst of Covid-19**

The apostle John, after recording Jesus' resurrection appearance to the disciples behind locked doors, records these words in verses 30 and 31 of John 20, "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

Jesus died and rose again that we might have life! John reminds us that the very scriptures were written with the accounts of Jesus' miracles and resurrection appearances so that we might believe and trust in him and thus have life!

During the coronavirus pandemic we are reminded just how precious life is. While we see lots of statistics every day about numbers of people infected and numbers of people who have died, there are names of people with families and loved ones behind those names.

Just a few days ago there was story in the Duluth News Tribune about Gloria Mary (Bertogliat) Lott, a sister to Julian Bertogliat of Esko, who passed away from the Corona virus. According to the article, she was a resident at St. Ann's in Duluth and the obituary mentioned that she was a great cook, incorporating her Italian heritage into great meals of spaghetti and other sumptuous dishes. The family surrounded her with a Zoom gathering the day before she died and sang her a hymn. The Minneapolis Star Tribune had an interesting article about the Bonstrom family, who lost a Grandma, age 69, from Bloomington to Covid-19 on March 31<sup>st</sup>. The grandma's daughter, who is also pregnant was very nervous that perhaps she had contracted the virus as well. But her tests came back negative. Days after her mother died, Cassie Bonstrom gave birth to a girl, Harley Sue. And praise God, they are healthy and virus free. The Bonstrom family experienced death and new life in a matter of days. Covid-19 plays no favorites.

Country music legend Joe Diffie lost his life due to coronavirus complications at the age of 61. Others who have lost their lives in Minnesota include engineers and homemakers, laborers and health care workers. One person in Minnesota was an executive, another a school bus driver. More than two dozen deaths in

*See "Life" continued on page 2*

## ***“Life” from page 1***

Minnesota have been United States military veterans. Even a beloved pastor at Second Presbyterian Church in Memphis, Tennessee has died from coronavirus complications.

My daughter Hannah is a nurse at Essential Health in Duluth, and she has already tested several people, including positive cases at a test site in West Duluth. Prayers for her and all health care workers safety and good health are welcomed.

Whether it's Covid-19, cancer, heart disease, a car accident, a drug overdose, or some other kind of life-threatening event, we are all confronted with the prospect of death at some point in our lives. But there is hope! Even though our earthly lives will come to an end, God promises a special kind of life now and eternal life to come in heaven.

When the resurrected Jesus appeared to the disciples behind locked doors he said to them, “peace.” Jesus gives to us the kind of peace that no one else can. It is the kind of peace that we need to calm our troubled hearts. It’s the peace that we need when anxiety overtakes our spirit. No matter how often we are confronted with the reality of death, the one thing we can always count on is Jesus’ resurrection peace, even behind our doors at home.

There are signs of life everywhere these days. I have noticed that the lilies are already poking through the ground on the west side of our house. I have noticed that the bird feeders are getting busier all the time with migrating birds arriving after their winter season in warmer climates. The sun is getting stronger every day!

But the best sign of life is the empty tomb, is the resurrection of Jesus! His life is given to us now and not even death can separate us from the life he gives. Jesus even showed his disciples the wounds in his side and hands to demonstrate that he was indeed alive and that he was the same person they ate with and enjoyed each other’s company with just a few days previously. As John says so well in the conclusion to chapter 20, “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

Praise God for the life we have in Jesus! It is a life that is ours even the midst of Covid-19.

In Christ,

*Pastor Jeff*

P.S. Thank you for making masks, delivering food, running errands, praying, listening to others, sending care packages, etc. You are the body of Christ! Thank you for sharing life and *the* life of Christ with others!

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**DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK, THE EVENTS SCHEDULED IN THIS NEWSLETTER ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.**

**KEEP PRAYING. GOD IS WITH US.**

## **St. Matthews Lutheran is Ready to Help Our Community During This Pandemic.**

We have people ready to provide support services to you if you are in need of someone to help you with grocery shopping or picking up a prescription. We also will be making phone calls to check on people we know are homebound, others who might need some assistance, or simply need someone to visit with. We want to help people stay connected as much as possible during this time when we are needing to distance ourselves from others.

**HOW CAN YOU HELP?** Please call the church office at 218-879-3510 if:

- You are in need of assistance
- You know someone we should add to our list to contact
- You want to help by making some phone calls
- You want to help deliver groceries or other things that are needed.

Let us all hold each other up in prayer at this time. “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

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## **Not all heroes wear capes. Some make face masks.**

Many people in developing countries don't have the option of social distancing or frequent handwashing to slow the spread of COVID-19. The CDC says that cloth face masks, along with hand washing and social distancing, may help reduce transmission.

Are you interested in helping Lutheran World Relief reach its goal of 75,000 face masks? LWR needs our help to sew cloth face masks for men, women and children in vulnerable communities. Laura Hanson hopes to organize this project at St. Matthews. She will apply for Thrivent Action Team monies to help cover supply and mailing costs.

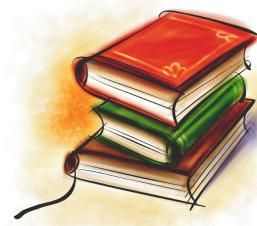
If you are willing to sew a few masks — or even a few dozen — please call the church office and have your name added to the **Face Mask Project** list before May 8. Laura will contact everyone interested to answer questions and provide more information.

Lutheran World Relief was founded 75 years ago to help neighbors around the globe who were suffering during World War II. Could this be our legacy for COVID-19?



## MAY BIRTHDAYS

- 1- Jace Stewart, Jason Seboe, Jonathan Stodola
- 2- Leif Herman
- 3- Ian Rossetti, Sue Wischnewski
- 4- Tallon Kiminski, Jerry Toman, Anna Hanson
- 5- Michaela Rossetti, Jenna Maslowski, Jess Crasweller
- 7- Eileen Christopherson, Kennedy DeBondt, Peter Contardo II
- 10- Judith Nelson, Pastor Tom, Tyler Issendorf
- 11- Katie Frank, Ella Seboe
- 12- Dennis Ellefson, Don Juntunen
- 13- Angie Davidson, Isabella Bowman
- 14- Peg Koski, Bella Forneris
- 15- Paul Koskela, Evelyn Eng, Katherine Welman, Daran Tan
- 16- Nancy Seppala, Rebecca Hanson
- 17- Joe Kersting, Jolene Anderson, Hillary Anderson, Gavin Belich, Bradley Warren, Nevaeh Butkiewicz
- 18- Tim Lindquist, Hailey Kangas, Sawyer Hipp, Dan Linder III
- 19- Roseann Erickson, Jason Paulson, Addison Johnson
- 20- Jay Kavajecz, Shannon Rahkola
- 21- Walter Behm, Margaret Lindquist, Travis Hansen, Shari Reuer, Nathan Stephenson
- 22- Karson Noordhoek
- 24- Mason Perich, Christopher Ebлом
- 26- Josh Gerard, Cody DeBondt, Brycen Mulek
- 27- Sandy Rengo, Matt Wisted
- 28- Ben Hanson, Aaron Fischer, Betina Johnsen
- 29- Sierra Boitz
- 30- Savannah Swenson
- 31- Richard Anderson, Mila Rahkola



## BOOK DISCUSSION

There will be no Book Discussion meeting in May. We usually do not meet during the summer. Possibly we will be able to organize a lunch date when we are all able to meet together again. Did you all enjoy our March book "Miss Brenda and the Loveladies by Brenda Spahn? I hope we will get a chance to discuss this in the future. April's book to read was the One Book Northland selection, "Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson. All the related community events have been cancelled. We have chosen our book for May, "The Wedding Dress" by Rachel Hauck. Happy reading and God's Blessings. Judy Nelson  
218-590-1521

**RESCHEDULED**

## CHURCH RUMMAGE SALE

The Esko Spring Rummage Sales have been cancelled. The Fall Rummage Sales are scheduled for September 17-19. St. Matthews plans on holding our sale in the fall during the Esko Sales.

## **St. Matthews Lutheran Church**

4 Elizabeth Avenue, Esko, MN 55733

218-879-3510

[www.stmatthewsesko.org](http://www.stmatthewsesko.org)

Pastor Jeff Walther 218-591-1436

Pastor Tom Brinkley 218-343-2080

Greetings and blessings to our community!

Here are a few updates to our worship and activities schedule:

### **WORSHIP:**

1. Sunday mornings- St. Matthews Lutheran Church worship services will be online via Facebook at 10:30 am. on the St. Matthews Lutheran Church [Facebook page](#) until further notice.
2. On TV - Another option for worship is on television: Channel 6 (KBJR) is airing [Mainstreet Living Northland](#) every Sunday at 9:30 am.

### **BIBLE STUDY:**

1. Tuesdays 9 am - "Coffee with the Pastors" online via Facebook and our Website.
2. Sundays 9 am - Adult Bible Study with Pastor Jeff via zoom

### **YOUTH:**

1. Sundays - watch Facebook and our website for a link to a Youtube video Bible study hosted by our Youth Director.
2. Tuesdays - T3 online- watch your e-mail or texts for a link each week!
3. Thursdays – Youth Group will be online via Zoom at 6:00 pm. I will send out a link Thursday mornings and you can join with your phone or computer. We will have games, music, devotion time, and even some prize giveaways!

\*TO JOIN ANY OF THESE YOUTH ONLINE OPTIONS TEXT YOUR CELL PHONE NUMBER AND/OR EMAIL ADDRESS TO CHRISTINA 218-391-3649.

### **CARE & OUTREACH:**

We have a Care and Outreach task force set up to help those in need. Please call the church office if you or someone you know has a need of any kind.

**Together, and with God's help, we will get through this tension-filled time. God is with us!**



Main Street Living Northland is a locally produced TV program that includes a 30 minute worship service led by participating pastors of the Minnesota North District of our LCMS, along with a 30 minute remastered program called "This is the Life" from Lutheran Hour Ministries (starting at 10:00 a.m.).

**May 3**  
Pastor Robert Franck  
Mount Olive Lutheran Church - Duluth

**May 10**  
Pastor Tom Brinkley  
St. Matthews Lutheran Church - Esko

**May 17**  
Pastor Arleigh vonSeggern  
Trinity Chapel - Phillips, WI

**May 24**  
Pastor John Bonk  
Shepherd of the Lake Lutheran Church -  
Two Harbors, MN

**May 31**  
Pastor Kevin Richter  
Peace in Christ Lutheran Church -  
Hermantown, MN

# St. Matthews

## Offering Income

April 17, 2020



Month	Given	Budget	Difference
July	40,000	43,800	(3,800)
Aug.	37,800	43,800	(6,000)
Sep.	45,000	43,800	1,200**
Oct.	38,500	43,800	(5,300)
Nov.	40,600	43,800	(3,200)
Dec.	51,300	43,800	7,500**
Jan.	38,800	43,800	(5,000)
Feb.	38,600	43,800	(5,200)
Mar.	41,700	43,800	(2,100)**
April	37,800	32,800	5,000*
Total	410,100.	427,000	(16,900)

\* April 1-17

\*\* 5 Sunday Month

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. 1 Chronicles 16:34

## LITTLE ESKOMO LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL

### HANGING FLOWER BASKET FUNDRAISER

The Preschool is selling certificates for 12" hanging flower baskets from the Fig Tree in Cloquet. The certificates cost \$29 each and can be purchased from preschool families or the church office.

You may pay with cash or make a check out to St. Matthews LELP. Certificates will be for sale through May 5th.

With hundreds of choices of flower baskets, this is a great way to prepare your porch or decks for spring. Thank you for supporting our preschool!

## Memorial Fund

*Sincere thanks to each person who honored and remembered a loved one or a friend with a gift  
to The Memorial Fund in February and March 2020*

### Gifts have been given in Memory of

Pat Bailey	Undesignated Fund
Dolly Paulson	Undesignated Fund
Dolly Paulson	Choir/Music Fund
Roland Uran	Undesignated Fund
Roland Uran	Choir/Music Fund
Clifford Trevena	Sunday School Fund
Glen Weber	Undesignated Fund
Leo Westerlund	Building/Improvement Fund

Memorial Choir/Music Funds were used to purchase supplies and music for Easter.

Please notify the church if you do not receive a Thank you from the family or the church for your gift.

For more information on Memorial gifts, please call a member of the Memorial Committee: Winnie Anderson, Walt & Shirley Behm, Eileen Christopherson, Elaine Lindquist, Gene & Margaret Lindquist, Florence Maki, Judy Nelson, Marilyn Pykkonen, Don & Ardy Pykkonen, or Judy Uran

Anyone wishing to make a contribution to the **Memorial Fund** in memory of a friend or loved-one, is welcome to do so. Please include the following information. Memorial folders are also available at the Welcome Center and on the table in the Narthex of the church. Contributions may also be made from our church website at [www.stmatthewsesko.org](http://www.stmatthewsesko.org). Select *Giving and Fees* in the top menu bar.

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### Memorial Fund

In Loving memory of \_\_\_\_\_

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In Honor of \_\_\_\_\_

Given to St. Matthews Lutheran Church by \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Fund \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Stewardship Corner**

Our Savior calls us to follow Him in generosity. “For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.” (John 13:15) We cannot give our lives for the salvation of the world, of course. Praise God – that job’s already done!

But with hearts full of thanksgiving for what Jesus has given us, we can follow Jesus’ example of generous giving. And this is not merely an example alone. It’s also our Lord’s command. “The one who contributes, (let him give) in generosity.” (Rom. 12:8)

So, when we give to help others who are in need, and when we bring offerings to the Lord, we should strive to heed His command and follow the pattern He has established for us. Jesus did not give us leftovers. He gave His best. So, we should not give leftovers, either, but the first and best of what He has given us. Jesus did not give as an afterthought, but according to the plan of salvation God established from the foundation of the world.

So, when it comes to our offerings to the Lord, we should make a thoughtful plan to give generously, in proportion to the way He has blessed us. Like the Macedonian Christians, who gave according to their ability – and even beyond their ability (2 Cor. 8:3) – we can and should give a generous portion of the income that God provides us to honor the Lord.

So also, we should give freely, just as Jesus gave freely for us. There is no compulsion involved in our works of love and our offerings to the Lord. Nor do we give grudgingly. We should give freely and cheerfully because we want to out of thanksgiving. “Each as he purposes in his heart,” as the Lord says. (2 Cor. 9:7) There is no New Testament ceremonial law involved here. Rather, we are free to give as generously as our Savior has given for us.

In the same way, our Lord teaches us to give generously out of love – love for Him and for our neighbor. Genuine love is always love in deed (1 John 3:18), love such as Jesus showed us all. It is love that sees our neighbor in need and gives generously to help him. It is love that hears the Word of the Lord and does what it says. If we truly love, we give generously. If we give without love, our giving is not truly following Jesus.

Finally, we follow Jesus in generosity when we give for a good purpose to thank the Lord and support His gospel ministry and other works of mercy. The people of Israel gave generously for the service of God’s gospel purposes, to construct and support the operation of the tabernacle. For that was the place where the Lord received the Old Testament sacrifices, through which He bestowed the forgiveness of sins on His people. So, they gave abundantly – so abundantly that they had to be told to stop giving. (Ex. 36:5-6)

*See “**Stewardship**” continued on page **11***

Members often ask how we are paying our bills when our offerings are often short of our budgeted needs. The short answer is that we need to budget for all expenses we are obligated to pay. At the end of each month, we will show how our offerings are actually being spent. Any surplus funds at the end of our fiscal year (June 30) will be used to pay down the church mortgage (\$777,204 on 3/31/20).

Church Operating Expenses Paid:	January	February	March		Total
Salaries	17,548	17,566	17,196		156,643
Benefits	9,911	7,178	7,050		67,474
Debt Payments	7,166	7,166	7,426		64,754
District/Synod Support	2,083	2,083	2,083		20,742
Electricity	1,201	1,127	1,204		8,446
Christian Education	169	1,116	484		3,776
Church Property	253	892	507		6,694
Office	1,516	1,482	1,955		12,471
Worship	1,377	280	81		4,062
Youth	-	-	-		573
HRA	474	440	4,146		6,081
Heating Fuel	1,269	1,553	1,685		6,785
Repair and Maintenance	116	453	-		3,956
Outreach/Missions	-	200	-		1,353
Conferences	-	-	100		270
Insurance	-	-	-		(82)
Other	-	-	-		-
<b>Total</b>	<b>43,083</b>	<b>41,536</b>	<b>43,917</b>		<b>363,998</b>
<b>Budgeted Needs</b>	<b>43,783</b>	<b>43,783</b>	<b>43,783</b>		<b>394,047</b>

***“Stewardship” continued from page 9***

In the same way, we should bring generous offerings to support the Lord’s work of bestowing His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation in our congregations through the preaching and teaching of His Word, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. We should support the Lord’s work of caring for those who are poor and needy.

Our Savior calls us to follow His example in generous giving. Let us then, with thankful hearts, rededicate ourselves to following Him in generosity.

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*Congratulations to Pastor Jeff!*

*On May 9th, he graduates with his  
Doctor of Ministry degree in Homiletics  
from the Talbot School of Theology.*

*May the Lord continue to walk beside  
you every step of life's journey.*



## Madagascar Mission Run to Maintirano

We do our best to keep the costs as low as possible for our church and mission partners. Even so, aviation is expensive, and the cost of chartering the airplane can still be a challenge to those who need it. To help with this, we have monthly flights to certain areas in which partners can pay for a single seat instead of having to charter the whole airplane.

This year we've started a new Madagascar Mission Run (MMR) to the western town of Maintirano. Only an hour and a half by air, it can take up to seven days by land and/or sea.

Our first MMR was full in both directions. There were church workers from two local churches, patients coming to Tana for treatment, as well as a missionary family, the Bowens.

Branden, Laura, and their two kids are missionaries who have been living in Maintirano for the last two years. They've driven the road plenty of times, but with the increasing insecurity and deteriorated road conditions after the rains, they have needed to fly often in the last few months.

For a short example of the road conditions to Maintirano (which happens to be **Route Nationale #1**) check out: <https://youtu.be/GQxsPLamGII>

Rob Barber, our chief engineer, had the chance to drive the road a few years ago. Here's the link to his photo blog with some more views of the road:

<http://mafbarbers.blogspot.com/2013/03/trip-to-maintirano.html>

Brandon recently shared these words:

*We are so thankful for MAF and their work here in Madagascar. Knowing that we have someone we can depend on for transportation is a great blessing for our family. With a 5 and 3 year old all the tropical illness that we have experienced and possibly could experience again can be discouraging when you consider the several days of travel that it would take to reach help, but knowing MAF is there is a comfort. Finally, I can personally say the MAF group here in Madagascar are not just great helpers to the church planting work, but great friends. And their concern and love they have shared for and with my family has been greatly felt.*



As a follow up from our last letter, Cyclone Belna brought lots of rain to the northwest, but not the wind damage that often results from a cyclone. There has been quite a bit of flooding due to the cyclone and subsequent rains, and even though MAF has not yet been called in to help, we are ready when needed. Many families have lost their rice crops, which will make the year a challenging one. Thank you for praying along with us that God would provide for these families.

Our Caravan is up and flying after its gear change, and I'm back in the air as well after my knee surgery. It turns out that the initial meniscus tear diagnosis wasn't correct, and I found out the day before surgery that I actually tore my ACL. Lots of details came together in a short time so that I could have the surgery in mid-December in South Africa and be back for Christmas.

We have no idea where the last two years went, but it's already time for another visit "back home". We're looking forward to catching up with you this summer. The plan is that we'll be in Minnesota in July and Manitoba in August, but that could change depending on current events. Whatever uncertainty the latest news report might bring, we can remember that this isn't the first time the world has been in turmoil. Paul's encouragement given 2000 years ago is just as relevant today.

***Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!...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 4:4-7***



Ryan Kristen Caleb Renée J OEL

### Please Join Us in Prayer

- One of our most frequently used airstrips, supporting the incredible work of the Hopitaly Vaovao Mahafaly (Good News Hospital) in Mandritsara, is also one of our most challenging ones. The airstrip has been enveloped by the growing town and has become a major through-way for traffic of every nature. It has a few established garbage dumps beside it which attract chickens and dogs, and has recently become the official community sports field (previously this was only unofficial). Please pray with us as we try to find a solution so that this airstrip can remain open and safe.

- Kristen's hearing has continued to deteriorate over the last few years, and we need to find an ENT to figure out the way forward. Thanks for praying for us to find the right connections.

#### Contact Us:

[ryan.unger@mafint.org](mailto:ryan.unger@mafint.org); [kristen.unger@mafint.org](mailto:kristen.unger@mafint.org)

#### Contact MAF

In Canada: Mission Aviation Fellowship of Canada  
102-195 Hanlon Creek Blvd. Guelph, ON N1C 0A1  
toll-free 1.877.351.9344 local 519.821.3914  
website [www.mafc.org](http://www.mafc.org) e-mail [info@mafc.org](mailto:info@mafc.org)



Mission Aviation Fellowship of Canada is a registered Canadian charity (number 12994 2561 RR0001) and a member of the Canadian Council of Christian Charities.

*Each gift allocated toward an MAF board-approved program will be used as allocated with the understanding that when any given need has been met, additional allocated gifts will be used where most needed.*

In the United States: Mission Aviation Fellowship  
PO Box 47, Nampa, ID 83653 USA  
toll-free 1.800.359.7623 local 208.498.0800  
website [www.maf.org](http://www.maf.org) e-mail [info@maf.org](mailto:info@maf.org)



MAF-US is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit charity and a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability.



# Tim & Diane Esala

## Easter 2020

*Christ is Risen!  
Hallelujah!!*



Although we continue to be passionate about God's mission to Cambodia through Stronghold, we are feeling sidelined like many of you. COVID-19 has caused our lives to be out of sync with our plans, hopes and dreams. We are tired and exhausted from the burden of fear, anxiety, uncertainty, boredom, etc but cannot rest. Jesus' words in Matthew 11:28 are meant to be an encouragement to us, yet sometimes we resist rest because it seems too difficult or out of reach and what we really want anyway is reassurance. But the rest Jesus offers us is different than our earthly version of rest. His rest is one of calm, patient expectation. It is a rest with the promise of fresh hope. Jesus is saying to us, "If you come to Me, I will take your exhaustion, fear, anxiety, uncertainty, boredom, and turn it into *fresh hope!*" Not something we need to work or achieve but a gift...*fresh hope* every morning! We pray that your Easter be filled with the ***fresh hope*** that comes from His resurrection!

### **RETURN TO CAMBODIA**

It is likely our return to Cambodia in June will be postponed. This is not unexpected but still saddens us. Cambodia has added complicated visa requirements for foreigners entering the country in addition to their current ban on foreigners from 6 countries (including USA). Currently, Stronghold is closed along with all public and private schools until further notice. According to the USA Embassy, only 3 airlines are operating flights to/from Cambodia and after April 11 there will be only two. Remaining here in the USA would allow us to continue to focus on Stronghold fundraising. Of course, that is looking much different than what we expected due to social distancing and other health/safety measures. Although social media is not one of our strengths, we are working on connecting with churches and individuals to partner with Stronghold.

***Pray for God to guide and lead us as we depend on Him to do the extraordinary in and through us, His ordinary followers.***

### **INTENSIVE GRANDPARENTING**

We are especially blessed to be at our rural property in Steeleville, IL (southern IL) with lots of wide open space because we have two of our grandchildren, ages 3-1/2 and 5 years old, from NC staying with us. Their daycare closed mid March and our son, Josh, and his wife, Megan, are now both working from home. They live in Durham with no family nearby, so in an effort to help them keep their jobs and stable mental health status, we have Hadley & Oliver with us. Durham is also under stay-at-home orders and extended school/day care closures, so it looks like we will have them at least until mid May. We are thankful we have the health and ability to care for them during this time. We are especially grateful to share Jesus' love through Bible stories, songs, prayer and love with them. Although the separation from their parents is difficult, this is the best decision for now. Our younger son, Aaron, lives in KC with his wife and 1 year old, Isidora. We are grateful that we had time with Isi, Hadley and Oliver together here before the recent stay-at-home orders for Illinois and Missouri.

***Pray for God to strengthen and sustain us as we care for our grandchildren and to heal the homesick hearts of our family with His love.***

### **PERSONAL HEALTH UPDATE**

God has granted a speedy and successful recovery from Diane's knee replacement surgery in late January! By mid March, Diane was needing no pain meds or walking aides and had completed PT. Just in time for the grandkids...which is a form of PT in itself! Tim is doing well and keeping busy and sane doing some hands-on home projects that have needed his attention for quite some time. We give thanks that none of our family has been ill or suffering with COVID-19.

***Pray for our family's general health and protection from COVID-19 but most importantly that God use these circumstances to form us in character and faith.***

## **COVID-19 IN CAMBODIA**

Since mid March, Cambodia has banned the entry of foreigners from six countries, including the USA, closed schools and universities and banned religious gatherings. Travel to neighboring Thailand and Vietnam has been blocked at most border crossings. The government has postponed/cancelled all gatherings for celebration of Khmer New Year this weekend and all workers must continue working instead of having holiday. Police will enforce a one week travel ban between Cambodian provinces. Khmer New Year is one of the most important celebrations in Cambodia with people traveling back to their home provinces to celebrate with extended family. Cambodia is on the verge of declaring a "state of emergency" that may give the government more constitutional powers leaving the people with less individual freedom. Cambodia currently has almost 119 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with more than half of them foreigners. Unfortunately, this results in discrimination from the Cambodians toward Westerners due to fear and misinformation. Here in the USA, our prejudices are racially reversed, but both reactions are based on fear not faith.

***Pray for people everywhere to choose faith over fear and prayer instead of panic as they grapple with the impact of COVID-19 on their lives.***

## **CHALLENGES FOR STRONGHOLD CAMBODIA**

Our three MCN teammates, Maria, Ashley & Samantha, remain in Cambodia as they await God's timing for their return to the USA. For now, they are safer there than attempting to travel with all the airline connection changes/closures and potential exposure while traveling. Because of the discrimination aimed at foreigners regarding COVID-19 and closure of Stronghold due to government orders, they are staying at their apartments most of the time. Jesse & Naomi are venturing out (while practicing social distancing and proper health/hygiene measures) to take food provisions to some of Stronghold's needy families who don't have enough food for the day during this difficult time. They are literally the hands, feet and hearts of Jesus for our families during this time. Some of our high school students have phones, so Stronghold is sending out face book messages of hope and love to them and asking them to share with others. Hopefully, some have found internet access as few have the luxury of connectivity in their homes. Follow Stronghold Cambodia on face book to view these posts including Jesse sharing the message of Easter in Khmer.

***Pray for health for our Stronghold team and families as they find ways to reach out in new ways to serve and support our students and families.***

We ask that you prayerfully consider supporting Stronghold Cambodia. Financial support of individual missionaries (like us) who volunteer time, effort and resources in serving Stronghold is only one of several giving choices to positively impact God's mission in Cambodia. Giving to the General Fund or joining the Child Sponsorship program supports the daily operating expenses of Stronghold. Giving to the Capital Campaign goes toward purchasing land and building a new permanent home. All donations are tax-deductible and go 100% to Stronghold Cambodia.

**Please contact Mission of Christ Network to assist you with IRA contributions or stock gifts.**  
[sara.endorf@missionofchrist.org](mailto:sara.endorf@missionofchrist.org) or [john.mehl@missionofchrist.org](mailto:john.mehl@missionofchrist.org)

### **Give On-line:**

[www.missionofchrist.org/stronghold-cambodia](http://www.missionofchrist.org/stronghold-cambodia)

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**Email us at:**  
[esala@missionofchrist.org](mailto:esala@missionofchrist.org)

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