

WHITEFIELDS

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GOI'S ROAD AHEAD

After 25 years, what does the future hold for GOI?

By Rev. Lawrence Fung

POST-COVID19 MISSIONS

Four ways the pandemic may have changed the shape of world missions.

By Rev. John Wang

PANDEMIC EVANGELISM

Reaching out to our neighbors can continue even when we must stay at home.

By Peter Cushman

MISSIONARY MEDIATORS

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Welcome to the 2020s

C OVID-19. Quarantine. Pandemic. Social distancing. Zoom. Livestreaming. Words and concepts that once lay on the periphery of relevance for many Christians are now part of the essential lexicon for every pastor, missionary and ministry professional. The pandemic has united the world in changing the habits and rituals that guide the way we relate to our loved ones, our community and our society.

What has not changed is the essential truth of the gospel, the necessity for Christian discipleship, and the call to Christian witness. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. (Hebrews 13:8) In this issue we explore the challenges posed by the shifting dynamics of our world, and propose new ways of thinking about cross-cultural ministry.

How have you had to engage the challenges of 2020 in your personal life, your family, your church and your ministry? How are you seeing God move? If you wish to reply to any of the articles written, or have a testimony to share, write us at info@goimission.org. We would love to hear from you.

One thing is for certain: God is moving. We live in interesting times. Let God's kingdom come, let His will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Chris Chu

16 April 2020



Photo by Chen Feng on Unsplash.



A view of New York City. Photo by Saketh Garuda on Unsplash.

LOOKING AHEAD

Rev. Lawrence Fung is the International Director of Gospel Operation International.

From the beginning, Gospel Operation International (GOI) has pursued a two-pronged mission strategy. We dedicated ourselves towards *reaching our kinsmen* (missions among overseas Chinese), and *touching all nations* (cross-cultural missions among different people groups). We believe that the God of history must have had an eternal plan in allowing millions of Chinese to be scattered to every corner of the world. According to the Bible, the Creator and Lord of history had a single mission in His mind--to make all nations His own people, that they might worship Him and enjoy eternal blessings with Him.

“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”” (Revelation 7: 9-10)

We believe that God wants to use diaspora Chinese to become blessings for all people; that is, to use the overseas diaspora Chinese church to lead all people groups to the Lord Jesus Christ. In the past 25 years, GOI has carried out church planting missions in more than 20 countries. More than 60% of these ministries are targeted at Chinese diasporas, including students, migrant workers, businessmen, immigrants and

even illegal immigrants. We hope that these Chinese churches will one day be able to preach the gospel to their non-Chinese neighbors and establish churches or fellowships for their local neighbors. One of our founders, Pastor Cyrus Lam, described this strategy as “Diaspora Bridge Mission,” where Chinese immigrants were trained to become a missional bridge to the nations they emigrated to. Dr. Enoch Wan, a researcher with the Lausanne World Mission Movement, also confirmed that “Diaspora Mission” had been a megatrend among different ethnic groups.

It will still take a long process to encourage Chinese diaspora churches to adopt the diaspora mission concept for themselves. So far, only a small number of Chinese churches established by GOI have participated in local cross-cultural ministry. The Board of directors and co-workers of GOI expect that our future ministry goals should focus on cross-cultural missions. We still care deeply about reaching overseas Chinese, but when we recruit our full-time missional partners, we will put more emphasis on cross-cultural mission work. GOI made some major changes and transformations over the past two years to lay the groundwork for our shift in emphasis.

Multinational headquarters team

Before the operation of GOI headquarters was moved back to the United States, the

new leadership team was already composed of co-workers from different regions. The administrative team at headquarters has also started to operate in online meetings. Before, GOI headquarters co-workers used to work at the same physical office, but this arrangement limited the pool of potential co-workers to the location of our office. If we want to hire co-workers from different countries, we have to consider the living expenses of their families and apply for their work permits. Yet in reality, most of our headquarters ministerial staff are constantly travelling to different fields. There is no need for them to work together in a single location. Thanks to modern technology, it's no longer difficult to arrange online discussions. Other support ministries, such as editing, design, publishing, and accounting, have been outsourced to places with GOI staff or area offices where the cost of living is low. We were able to save a lot of money by eliminating a physical headquarters office, and invested the saved money on manpower and ministry development. One possible sacrifice of eliminating our physical headquarters is team relationships, so the headquarters administrative team tried to meet together physically at least once a quarter. In these meetings, there was always time for team building and fellowship, in addition to our normal business meeting, strengthening our personal relationships. Another advantage of our remote-working headquarters has been an improved capacity to respond to urgent problems or needs that may occur in various parts of the world. Headquarters co-workers live closer to our various ministry regions, and are thus better able to understand the real needs of various regions, making more appropriate coordination decisions.

Mission statement and core values

In 2018, the International Board of Directors re-established the vision and mission statement of GOI. We believe that our calling is to educate, recruit, train, and send missionaries together with the global Chinese diaspora church. Together with God's universal church, we will cooperate to complete the Great Commission. One of the most wonderful

things is that all GOI directors and co-workers share the same spirit of cooperation with God's global church. I think the Holy Spirit emphasized the need to cooperate with churches and institutions from different cultures to accomplish God's kingdom cause. We do not need to rush to "insert our flags" in different mission fields to "claim our territory." We should be humble and teachable, learning and collaborating with others on the field. The focus is on making disciples for our Lord Jesus, not showing off our own accomplishments. The emphasis on collaboration also includes the willingness to share resources. Whether it is human or material resources, we should consider sharing in the mission field. We believe that GOI is part of God's universal missions team. The resources entrusted to GOI are also the things entrusted to the universal church by God. We need to be good stewards to make good use of the resources given to us, but we must also be careful not to take possession of these things entrusted to us. The mission center we established in Uganda's capital city officially opened in January of this year. We invited representatives from different churches and missions to participate, emphasizing that this center welcomes co-workers from different missions to share the space. Less than a month later, another mission agency immediately borrowed our venue for training. Convinced that this kind of collaboration mentality is pleasing to God, we believe that resource sharing should be a new norm for the future development of missional work.

Sending nations are also mission fields

In the development history of GOI, this is really a revolutionary decision. Global mission trends have been diminishing the difference between sending and receiving countries. The European and American countries that used to send many missionaries in the past have now become



mission fields that demand a lot of missionaries. Conversely, the African and Asian countries that had accepted many missionaries in the past are today the areas where most missionaries are sent out of. Furthermore, great migratory movements of immigrants, refugees, short-term foreign students, businessmen and foreign workers have brought so-called “unreached people” into so-called “sending” countries. We find people of all cultures within the great metropolises of the world. It is the responsibility of GOI to encourage the church to further engage in local cross-cultural missions. GOI should make good use of our existing international network to recruit Chinese workers from different countries to enter these global metropolises for short-term mission work. As the global economy shrinks, the church may have difficulty supporting more full-time missionaries. Future trends may require the

"I think the Holy Spirit emphasized the need to cooperate with churches and institutions from different cultures to accomplish God's kingdom cause."



Photo by Zenas Fung



Giant pillars in the city of Tyre, Lebanon bear silent witness to Lebanon's religiously diverse history. Lebanon is home to almost 5.5 million citizens and 1.5 million refugees. Though fragile, Lebanon's cosmopolitan society is a relatively open environment for both citizens and refugees to receive the gospel. Photo by Zenas Fung.

training and recruitment of more “bi-vocational” or “business as mission” missional partners to serve cross-culturally at home or abroad. In one example, we have a Malaysian missionary involved in local cross-cultural refugee ministry. The United States office has another co-worker applying for cross-cultural refugee ministry within the United States. Increasingly, global missions no longer exclusively distinguishes between sending and receiving countries. It is believed that the COVID-19 pandemic will severely affect short-term missions. The development of local cross-cultural mission ministry becomes necessary to account for increasing numbers of people who are afraid to travel abroad. Our various offices are encouraged to actively plan for the promotion of local cross-cultural mission work.

GOI has no intention to replace the role of local churches. We aspire to encourage, support, and train the brothers and sisters of the local church to take the initiative to participate in cross-cultural mission work in their respective neighborhoods. GOI can serve as a pioneering missions catalyst to invite local churches into cross-cultural ministry, and inter-cultural church fellowship.

Encourage new missional leadership

GOI needs to actively prepare for a new generation of successors, even if new leaders will inevitably introduce different emphases and operational philosophies. This is an unavoidable fact. Training of the new leadership should be an important priority for the future ministry development. In the past, churches and institutions were busy with pioneering ministries and sometimes neglected to train successors. As a result, there is a crisis of lack of leadership today. The members of GOI’s International Board of Directors has begun looking for younger directors to succeed existing international directors. Without younger international directors, it would be difficult to attract younger leaders to join the headquarters team. Without younger

mission leaders in headquarters, it will be difficult to attract young missionaries to serve. Thanks be to God, several younger directors and members joined the Board last year. This is a beautiful start. At the same time, we must also actively start training internal leaders, hoping to develop new successors from within. As older leaders, we must learn to cooperate with younger staff with humility and a teachable spirit. We who are older should not use our experience as an excuse to stifle the creative ideas and suggestions of younger colleagues. Methods that would not have been considered in the past may be appropriate for the present or the future, while allowing younger colleagues to try new suggestions is vital for trust-building. Part of our role is to help them learn to assess risk so that even failure will not bring too much loss. Change may be the norm, but we must also pay close attention to the speed and impact of change. Younger co-workers may be more alert than older co-workers to the way missions is changing, so it is important to listen to the analysis and opinions of younger co-workers regarding the future development of churches and institutions. Not only should older co-workers regularly review missions methods and strategies with their younger colleagues, but our mission statement and core values should be reviewed together every five years to maximize GOI’s relevance and adaptability.

Ministry to all nations

Pastor Cyrus Lam, former general director of GOI, reminded the administrative team two years ago that GOI--indeed, the Chinese Church at large--should devote more emphasis on cross-cultural mission work. Many missionaries who come out of mainland China are attracted to ministry to other Chinese, due to the difficulties of cross-cultural and language learning. However, many overseas Chinese churches do not necessarily have a passion for cross-cultural missions, despite being founded with the promise of being a “diaspora bridge mission.” Church

"There is a great opportunity to preach the gospel to the different cultures that have congregated in the metropolises in which we already live. The question is whether the church will perceive that this is the opportunity God has prepared for us."

members may not necessarily have long-term residence status. There are many believers and friends in overseas Chinese churches who work with short-term visas. As a result, these churches tend to be highly transient, and most are not keen to evangelize local people to begin with. However, overseas Chinese churches do provide opportunities for Chinese expatriates to come to know Jesus Christ and be transformed as a result.

Having grown these past 25 years, GOI is pursuing the goal of cross-cultural missions, recruiting missionaries and developing new fields for cross-cultural missions. Most overseas Chinese churches outside of mainland China are used to living in a dual-cultural environment, and will have certain advantages in language learning over churches in mainland China. Perhaps God allowed so many Chinese to emigrate overseas in previous years, so that they and their descendants can actively pursue cross-cultural missionary work today. It is for this reason that GOI is actively mobilizing English-speaking second generation believers in overseas Chinese churches for cross-cultural missions. Thank God, we currently have two English speaking staff workers from North America. We also have five offices in regions (Canada, United States, Australia, Philippines and Singapore) that have the potential to recruit

English-speaking missionaries. Through the joint efforts of these offices, GOI can open up future English-based mission fields for new missionaries to join. When the time is ripe, GOI's English ministry can become a parallel ministry that operates with independent capabilities.

Mobilize bilingual believers in Latin America

There are many Spanish-speaking believers in Chinese churches in Latin America. In the early days of GOI, missionaries were sent to Central and South America to help establish Chinese churches. More than 20 years later, many younger members of these churches are bilingual and share the conviction to reach the indigenous groups of South America. There is an opportunity to serve indigenous peoples through sharing the gospel, discipleship and providing medical and material aid. Bilingual members of Chinese South American churches will benefit from being native Spanish speakers when reaching out to indigenous groups. Pastor Huang, the late director of GOI, once challenged the leaders of the Chinese church in Argentina to build a training center in South America. They have built a magnificent 8-story building for missional use. We plan to invite different field workers and mission agencies in



Ugandan men clean fish caught in Lake Victoria. Photo by Hennie Stander on Unsplash

Latin America to share the use of this building as a center for mission mobilization in South America. In order to mobilize the Spanish-speaking mission ministry, the International Board of Directors has approved GOI to open offices and hire co-workers in Argentina and set up a Spanish GOI website to facilitate contact with the next generation of Chinese churches in Latin America. Pastor John Loh, our Spanish language ministry coordinator, has begun to lead mission teams into the Amazon basin in Bolivia to participate in gospel ministry among indigenous people. I hope we can mobilize more young people who speak English or Spanish in the future to help the ministry to indigenous peoples in the area.

New ways to be a missionary

Already before the coronavirus pandemic, the

administrative team of GOI had been discussing and drafting modifications to GOI's existing missionary categories and application process. Our goal is to encourage more brothers and sisters to participate in the global mission work in response to God's call. No matter whether it is full-time or bi-vocational, long-term or short-term, local or overseas, we hope to mobilize more brothers and sisters of the Chinese church to devote themselves to the work of global mission. Although we are not entirely sure what the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic will be, we have reason to believe that in the next few years, the global economy will be severely impacted, so that financial support for missions will drop significantly. This situation may encourage more brothers and sisters to participate in bi-vocational mission work. In addition, before the Coronavirus pandemic is under control,

many brothers and sisters may hesitate to participate in overseas cross-cultural mission activities. Does this mean that the work of missions or cross-cultural missions will stop? On the contrary, I think God uses something like the pandemic to mobilize more brothers and sisters to participate in local cross-cultural missions. There is a great opportunity to preach the gospel to the different cultures that have congregated in the metropolises in which we already live. The question is whether the church will perceive that this is the opportunity God has prepared for us. If any missionary is forced to return to their sending country because of reduced economic support, he or she should not be discouraged. This may be because God wants to use their years of experience in missions abroad to return to their homeland to help sending churches or other local Chinese churches to learn how to do local cross-cultural mission work. They can serve on a local level the same cultures they studied, using the same languages they learned on the field. I am excited to see how God's missional movement after the pandemic will expand, uplifting Christians everywhere to penetrate into different neighborhoods--and even into the internet "cloud"--to fulfill the Great Commission.

Investing in gateway cities

The "gateway city" is a mission strategy proposed by GOI more than eight years ago. Our top priority in selecting new mission sites was to consider whether there was a pre-existing mentor there to train new recruits for the field. The second requirement was to consider whether the field has the potential to develop a holistic mission ministry so that newly recruited co-workers or missionary interns can learn different forms of missional work. In the past, we chose Uganda in Africa, Cambodia in Southeast Asia, and Mexico City in Latin America as the locations where we tried to establish gateway cities. Thank God, we have trained many missionary interns at the gateway city in Cambodia, with some of the graduates having entered different mission fields. Some were accepted as reserve missionaries and returned home to receive theological training before being sent out



again. We also trained some short-term missionary interns in Uganda, though churches have been reluctant to send more candidates there for training.

The gateway city in Mexico City trained some short-term missions participants, but could not continue to operate due to the departure of the field director. In reviewing the gateway city strategy, I think that choosing a mission field to train missionary interns is valuable, but there may not have been enough support or diverse ministry opportunities for our missionaries. It is very difficult to rely on a single co-worker to supervise interns, so GOI needs to deploy more manpower and resources to strengthen its fields.

Our field in Cambodia is really a bit "overcrowded"--a good problem to have, thank God! Originally it was good to send more workers there, but it has



Men chat as they ride a ferry in Cambodia. The [Joshua Project](#) considers the vast majority (99.3%) of Cambodia to be “unreached,” defined as when Christians in a people group lack the people or the resources to reach their own people without outside help. Pray that God would open doors for His gospel and firmly establish the foundations of the Cambodian church. Photo by Markus Henze on Unsplash.

We need to choose a new stronghold to establish a gateway city in Latin America. We look forward to our mission in Argentina in the future, where trainees will be recruited in Latin America and speak Spanish. God will use a Chinese mission agency to bless other ethnic groups, which is very exciting. The question is whether GOI is ready to break out from Chinese cultural bondage to become a channel of blessings to all nations. May the missional Lord move and strengthen our leaders to step out of their comfort zone.

Last year, when the executive committee decided on the theme “A New Era of Mission” for our 25th anniversary, we did not anticipate the coming of a new coronavirus. Now that the world has been ravaged by this epidemic, the relationship between people and the world has been pushed into a new norm. We have no certainty about how this new norm may affect the church or missions agency, but we are convinced that the whole world will no longer conduct “business as usual.” We really need to be humble before God, and wait for the guidance of the Holy Spirit through prayer. Just as the early church obeyed the Holy Spirit’s guidance and adapted to change, we should do the same. No matter how the environment may change, we know for sure that our Lord and His great commission remain unchanged. Scripture declares, *“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”* (Matthew 24:14) Let us wait with excitement and expectation for the coming of a new era of mission. •

become difficult to supervise and care for them all. We hope that other missionary staff can help share the responsibility of supervising the new recruits.

God prepared a wonderful new mission center in Uganda that has an auditorium that can accommodate more than 100 people, and living space for several trainees. The question is now whether we can recruit full-time missionaries or interns to serve in Africa. This mission center is a special arrangement made by GOI for “missionaries from mainland China.” We expect that God will raise more young missionaries in the country and respond to his call to come to Uganda to serve with us. In addition to being used by the Chinese Church, this center is also a place where many children from the slums can be disciplined to follow Jesus.

GLOBAL MISSIONS AFTER THE PANDEMIC

Rev. John Wang is the Deputy International Director of Research for Gospel Operation International.

First discovered in China, COVID-19 has by now extended to almost every corner of the world. These days, we are all overwhelmed by the challenges in meeting the daily necessities of food, housing, schooling, transportation, and even employment. The basic routines of millions of people in many countries appear to be suddenly interrupted. The pace of our lives have slowed down substantially, and we now live in a time of “pause”; missionary life and work has been no exception.

One day, the COVID-19 pandemic will be brought under control. The Great Commission of Jesus Christ will continue to inspire further missionary movement among Christian churches-missions will and must continue. What kind of situation will we be facing when we slowly come out of the pandemic? What kind of challenges will we need to overcome? What will be their impact on missionary work? I wanted to focus my reflections on four critical areas: national borders, missionary knowledge, technological applications, and ethnic considerations.

National borders

Advances in transportation and digital technology seemed in recent decades to have brought countries closer together. Globalization as a movement has long been recognized and pursued by nations. Once upon a time, missionaries had to endure several months of transoceanic voyage to arrive at their mission field, but now it only takes a few hours

to reach one’s destination by plane. Missionary travel became relatively convenient and affordable when compared to the travails of the 19th century. It became much easier for missionaries to go to the field, and their returns on furlough were no longer as rare. Short-term missionary trips surged in popularity, offering first-hand missions experiences without the same level of investment in time and money as long-term missions. Videos, SMS, emails, and social media have become the favored tools of communication, and frequent online interactions strengthen modern relationships. The gradual loosening of national borders in recent decades promoted a continuous increase of transnational enterprise and multinational cooperation. Globalization continued to grow in cultural, economic and political arenas, and it seemed certain that we were heading towards a more interconnected environment and lifestyle.

But now, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are instead bombarded by news of stay-at-home orders, closures of national borders, suspensions of flights, requests to self-isolate, and the strictures of quarantine. Indeed, isolation and social distancing have become the new norm. People avoid having contact with each other for reasons of public health, and refuse to interact with outsiders. Governments have tightened border controls, and most countries now treat foreign visitors with deep suspicion. It will be difficult for countries to return to the former attitude of openness and trust. The



Photo by Krissara Leertimmanorladee on Unsplash

advances of globalization in recent decades may now have to be greatly discounted.

Whether it is long-term or short-term, one of the most direct impacts on Christian mission under this retreat of globalization will be in regards to national borders. Government attitudes towards international travel and foreigners will no longer be as friendly as they were before the pandemic, and the divide in nationalities and national boundaries will be much more pronounced. Governments are likely to view global missions with greater skepticism than before. Career missionaries and short-termers may face stricter visa requirements, restrictive domestic policies, and more intrusive interventions on the mission field. The professional knowledge possessed by mission agencies and the social network possessed by national churches may gain prominence in the months to come. Missionary work may rebalance towards a traditional field-centric model.

Missionary knowledge

The medical community is urgently studying the source of COVID-19, ways of infection, testing, and diagnosis of the disease. Medical laboratories around the world are racing to develop vaccines and drugs, and the entire world is looking forward to the emergence of an effective treatment. Expert medical knowledge has become more important than ever in efforts to control the pandemic and institute effective public health policies, requiring effective communication and the wisdom to make careful, informed decisions.

In the field of missions, expert knowledge and missional strategies are equally important. We need missionaries with rich professional knowledge to face the challenges of frontline work. They need to have experienced personal encounter with God, and have professional training and knowledge in evangelism,

discipleship, cultural adaptation, cross-cultural communication, and language learning. On the other hand, mission agencies also need a clearer overall strategic plan. No single mission agency can do everything, so there is a need for prioritizing. Missions methods and strategies have undergone subsequent waves of changes in the last several hundred years. It falls to GOI and other members of the mission community to innovate and develop new post-pandemic methods and directions for missionary work.

Technological applications

Technology had already been progressing at a breakneck speed prior to the pandemic. Interestingly, the coronavirus outbreak has stimulated an even more rapid upgrade of technological applications, due to the immediate needs for social distancing, isolation, and contact tracing. Families sheltering-in-place increasingly rely on deliveries for their shopping, and even small remote-controlled drones are used to transport supplies in some areas to minimize contact. Many schools were forced to close because of the severe outbreak, so online learning became the norm, despite the preference by many for physical classroom settings. Recent weeks have already seen substantial improvements in many online educational applications. Health officials use artificial intelligence technology to monitor and track quarantine compliance for international travelers. These technological applications will continue to improve and mature for the duration of the outbreak.

In the past, it was a challenge to transport supplies to needy indigenous people. There was simply no adequate transportation infrastructure and means to reach their homes. Drones can become a viable transport solution as the technology matures. Online teaching tools can become valuable ministry tools. Online worship, online teaching, online



"Governments are likely to view global missions with greater skepticism than before. Career missionaries and short-termers may face stricter visa requirements, restrictive domestic policies, and more intrusive interventions on the mission field."

prayer meetings, and online Bible studies have inspired many creative ideas for missionaries and church leaders. Unfortunately, contact tracing technology developed to monitor people in self-isolation may produce greater difficulties for Christians in some environments as Christians and churches are tracked with greater efficacy. We may see intensified persecution of Christian churches in some countries.

Ethnic considerations

Mainland Chinese Christians had adopted an optimistic attitude in recent years towards missions in general, and the place of the

Chinese church within global missions. Some considered the Chinese churches to be the obvious candidate to take up the last "baton" in world mission, due to their relative abundance of human and material resources. There were those who argued that Chinese churches were best suited for today's missionary work because they were not saddled by historical baggage of Western imperialism, colonialism, or the slave trade. Investments made by the People's Republic of China in Asia, Africa and Latin America in recent years promoted economic development in various regions, increasing the presence of Chinese diasporic communities

Photo by Kian Zhang on Unsplash



"Missionaries from the West had to face their painful baggage from imperialism and colonialism; now missionaries from the East will also need to face the baggage of the COVID-19 pandemic."

and reducing the cultural distance between Chinese immigrants and their host countries. It seemed to some that this was the perfect era for the Chinese Christians to be involved in world mission. Some even claimed the Belt and Road Initiatives of the Chinese government to be an ideal platform to bring the gospel "back to Jerusalem."

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a "wake-up call" against the so-called missionary advantages of most Chinese churches. Nowadays, a person who even appears to be Chinese is negatively associated with the pandemic. Generalization may be an attitude that we all condemn, but it is a fact

that Chinese are no longer warmly welcomed by citizens of other countries as we were in the past. Missionaries from the West had to face their painful baggage from imperialism and colonialism; now missionaries from the East will also need to face the baggage of the COVID-19 pandemic. Perhaps Chinese Christians will no longer boast about their advantages and instead humbly work together with the global church in cooperation towards the fulfillment of God's mission for the world.

The challenges posed by national borders, missionary knowledge, technological applications, and ethnic considerations are diverse and real.

Some consequences of the pandemic may have a positive effect on GOI's global missions efforts. However, some of them may make missionary work more difficult in the future. In addition, this article did not cover the economic, political or other impacts of the pandemic, nor does it discuss the effects of the pandemic on personal spirituality.

We believe that the COVID-19 pandemic is already making a great impact on your life and ministry. The Psalmist reminds us that “the Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord is enthroned as King forever.” (Psalms 29:10 NIV) We pray that God's church will actively and courageously rise up by His grace, overcome challenges, and faithfully participate in God's mission to the world! •

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted economies around the globe, exposing millions to deprivation and food insecurity. Some of the most affected are Syrian refugees who lived on subsistence levels even before the pandemic. GOI started the COVID-19 Relief Fund in part to help our mission partners feed refugee communities who have already been through tremendous difficulty. If you would like to help with a financial donation, please go to <https://goimission.org/index.php/relief-fund/>





Photo by Dennis Brendel for Unsplash

PANDEMIC EVANGELISM

Spreading the Gospel, Not the Virus

Guest contributor Peter Cushman serves as the Pastor of Outreach at Inter-City Baptist Church in Detroit, MI. He is also a writer for Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary's blog. This article has been adapted from the first three parts of an ongoing series discussing ways to evangelize during the COVID-19 pandemic; you can read the full-length posts [here](#).

My pastor quipped one Sunday that during the present crisis, we should spread the gospel, not the virus. I've developed a few ways that we can follow his directive during this time.

Fervently Pray for the Lost

Fervently pray for the lost! When we pray, we don't feel like we're doing anything, but really we're doing the most effective thing. Prayer directly impacts reality. God uses prayer to accomplish his purposes in time and space. Moses held his arms up in intercessory prayer as Israel defeated the Amalekites ([Ex 17:8-13](#)); God withheld rain from the land of Israel for 3½ years per Elijah's request ([Is 5:16-18](#)); Paul admonished the Corinthians to help him through persecution by means of prayer ([2 Cor 1:11](#)). Simply stated, prayer works.

Here are some requests that you could pray for.

- Pray for opportunities to tell the lost about Christ. ([Col 4:3](#))
- Pray for clear communication. ([Col 4:4](#))
- Pray for the seed of the gospel to find good soil in people's hearts. ([Mark 4:14-20](#))
- Pray for the lost to be saved! ([Rom 10:1](#))

During threatening times, it's easy to fixate on our own needs and concerns; however, we must also remember the eternal need of the lost. Jesus said, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." ([Matt 10:28](#)) There is something far worse than physical death, the coronavirus, or any temporal circumstance. The lost are in danger of a Christless eternity. Let's plead for their salvation.

Perhaps these cues will help you pray for the lost.

- Incorporate prayer for the advance of the gospel into your regular prayer times (meals, devotions, etc.)
- Keep a list of lost people that you're praying for as a family, and pray for them when you do family devotions.
- As you walk or drive through your neighborhood, pray through the names of your neighbors who need Christ.



BIBLE VERSES ABOUT

EVANGELISM

"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."
(1 PETER 3:15)

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."
(2 CORINTHIANS 5:20)

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."
(2 TIMOTHY 2:15)

"But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry."
(2 TIMOTHY 4:5)

"And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give."
(MATTHEW 10:7)

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them."
(MATTHEW 28:19-20)

- When you feel fear and anxiety concerning the coronavirus, pray for someone who is lost.

God can use this time to awaken the lost to their desperate need for him. Let's pray to that end.

Tell the Lost You're Praying for Them

The Bible says that we don't know the circumstances of tomorrow. "You do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes" ([James 4:14](#)). We are limited and frail. At the same time, we have a relationship with the true and living God through Christ! God planned each day that we will live ([Ps 139:16](#)). He even prepared good works that we will accomplish ([Eph 2:10](#)). He promises us eternal good ([Ps 23:6](#); [Rom 8:28](#)). He guarantees that nothing will separate us from his love ([Rom 8:35-39](#)). He assures us that he will use the worst circumstances of our lives for a good and glorious purpose ([Gen 50:20](#))! Christian, you may not know what tomorrow holds, but you know the One who holds tomorrow.

Now consider the plight of the lost. They don't know what tomorrow holds, and they don't know the One who holds tomorrow. Honestly, I can't think of a more hopeless and helpless situation. Imagine the uncertainty and anxiety they currently experience. The rug is being pulled out from under them; the things that they live for are crumbling before their eyes (health, bank account, career success, etc.). They have no certainty, assurance, or hope in this life or the next.

Tell the lost you're praying for them. Let them know that you're bringing their needs before the true and living God who alone can hear and help. I think this step accomplishes two things. First, it is a good work which causes your gospel light to shine ([Matt 5:16](#)). Second, it naturally leads to opportunities to talk about your relationship with God. Based on my experience, many people will welcome the opportunity. Generally speaking, people are anxious, uncertain, and scared. Assuming that you've been letting your light shine in your interactions with unbelievers, they sense that you know God. They discern that there is something

genuinely different about your life. They won't be surprised when you ask to pray for them. What's more; I think they'll be grateful.

Recognize Opportunities for Evangelism

You cannot do evangelism without talking about Christ. There are several activities that can adorn the gospel, like performing good works or inviting someone to church, but if we only do these things without talking about Christ, then we haven't evangelized. So the question is, "How do we have conversations about Christ?" We must recognize opportunities. I'm convinced that I gloss over many daily opportunities for the gospel. Often my antenna is not in tune with the frequency of the Lord of the harvest. I need a keener sensitivity to detect open doors. God opens doors for the gospel, and we depend on him completely (That's why it's a prayer request!).

Paul's pattern when he showed up in a new town was to first preach the gospel in the synagogue (e.g., [Acts 13:14](#)). Paul also shared the gospel in the market with those who were present ([Acts 17:17](#)). He spoke with those who would willingly listen. In defense of his methods, Paul explained that he openly proclaimed the gospel. He refused to manipulate people or distort God's Word ([2 Cor 4:1-2](#)). We can't force people to listen; we depend on God to secure us a hearing for the gospel.

Here are some things that you can do to sharpen your awareness.

- **Take notice of the people you see on a regular basis (next-door neighbors, mail carriers, store clerks, classmates, etc.).** The Bible says that God chooses when and where people live so that they will seek and find him ([Acts 17:26-27](#)). It's no coincidence that you cross paths with the same unbelievers daily. Odds are God wants them to hear the gospel from your lips. So look around. Who do you bump into regularly? I'll bet there's an opportunity there.

- **Talk to these people.** You'll never get around to the gospel if you don't start the conversation. Purposefully put yourself in their path. If you see your neighbor outside, then stop what you're doing and go talk to him/her. Leave yourself a little extra time in the store, at the gym, or the coffee shop (whenever gyms and coffee shops are open again!). Often we schedule our lives so tightly that God may fling the door wide open for the gospel, but we have no time to walk through.
- **Learn names.** The baseline for friendship is addressing a person by name. When you ask
- **Listen.** Train your ear to listen well and especially take note when someone talks about

for someone's name, you show interest in developing a more significant relationship. This is important because you're seeking an opportunity to talk with them about the most significant and serious thing, their relationship with God. Most people prefer to know someone, at least minimally, before opening up. Not only does learning names strengthen the relationship, but praying for people by name makes your prayers more focused and increases your burden for the lost.

“Tell the lost you're praying for them. Let them know that you're bringing their needs before the true and living God who alone can hear and help.”



the meaning and purpose of life. When the conversation moves beyond small talk to more meaningful topics, this is where we encounter opportunities for the gospel. Listen to them talk about their hopes and aspirations, future plans, relationships, problems, and fears. These kinds of topics lead to opportunities to talk about the true meaning and purpose of life, knowing God through Christ. The pandemic is exciting because we can get to the gospel faster. People are primed to talk about the frailty and uncertainty of life. The coronavirus has confronted us with our finitude. It's made us aware of the brevity of life and our desperate need for hope beyond death. Listen carefully as people talk about their lives.

Even though we are more limited nowadays, these instructions still apply. Our mail carrier still comes to our house every day. We see our next-door neighbors from across the fence every day, more than usual actually. We still go to the same local market when we need to stock up. These routines represent dozens of people whom the Lord has intentionally put into our lives. •



A woman sells bread in a neighborhood bazaar. Photo by Irene Strong on Unsplash.

MISSIONARY MEDIATORS

Patron-Client Relationships in Cross-Cultural Missions

The author is a GOI missionary who works with unreached people groups in the Muslim world.

It's often said that missionaries build relationships with the people they serve as a bridge to the gospel, but what does that mean? How might it look like for cross-cultural missions to be more relational? An experienced missionary offers a glimpse into his own Scriptural reflections, tempered by field experience.



Photo by Austin Kehmeier on Unsplash

J is a Muslim young man we've known for many years. He had heard the gospel from a few short-term missionaries in the past, but although everything about the Christian faith sounded good to him, he was reluctant to leave Islam. He did not want to break his mother's heart, because he lost his father when he was little, and he is his mother's only child. We hung on to the friendship, hoping that one day the Lord would pour out His blessings on him. One day, the opportunity came. JJ's mother travelled from her remote village to our city for a major surgery; she needed to remain in the city for frequent check-ups and recovery before she could go home. The family had limited resources in the city, but we offered care and companionship to

them. All this went on for over a month, and as a result we became good friends. As our relationship with the mother grew, the son felt more comfortable to confide in us and trust in our advice. Eventually, he became a believer with the help of the Spirit.

What does it mean for a person to have a relationship with God? When we define relationship, we tend to use the word “love” which, in the modern sense, emphasizes the emotive component of the relationship. Does this understanding adequately describe our relationship with God? When the Lord proclaimed that He is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, the word “love”, translated from the Hebrew word *hasad*, describes God’s unceasing commitment to a relationship with His people; it may be better to translate it to “loyalty”. Through a covenant, our God

binds Himself to a patron-client relationship with us. As the patron God, He promises to redeem us, protect us, and provide for us. We, as the client, are expected to reciprocate God’s *hasad* with loyalty and faithfulness (Ps 18:25), and in return, the Patron will recompense for what we do (Ps 62:12). The same concept of *hasad* love and faithfulness continues in the New Testament when Jesus correlates love and obedience. “If you obey my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commandments and remain in His love.” (Jn 15:10). From the patron-client perspective of relationship, a loyal and faithful client is the one who obeys the Patron.

“When we define relationship, we tend to use the word “love” which . . . emphasizes the emotive component of the relationship. Does this understanding adequately describe our relationship with God?”

How does this patron-client concept apply in cross-cultural missions? We know that the 10/40 culture is mostly relational, and relationships are understood in the patron-client sense in which loyalty is the essence. The job of the missionary is to serve as the mediator of God, bestowing His blessings in the name of Christ. So, in effect, missionaries are little patrons acting on behalf of our Patron God, looking for loyal clients who are willing to respond to His *hasad*. But before that can happen, people need to become our loyal clients first. They need to trust us enough before our messages of the good news can carry any weight to them. Otherwise, repentance and forgiveness of sins

would only be superficial head knowledge—people won’t be able to appreciate how much *hasad* they owe the Patron.

Perhaps it is time for us to reflect on our mission approaches. We have been focusing much on

methodologies: developing teaching materials, translating Bibles, running programs, training personnel, and so on. All these are helpful tools, but we may have missed the essence. Yes, we do establish relationships, but more often we see it as a means to communicate the gospel that leads to salvation. Maybe it’s time for us to rethink missions from a relational perspective. If the gospel is indeed the relationship with the living God, the big question for missionaries may be: How do we serve as living and relational mediator-patrons so that through us, living people can become loyal clients who can relate to the ultimate living Patron? •

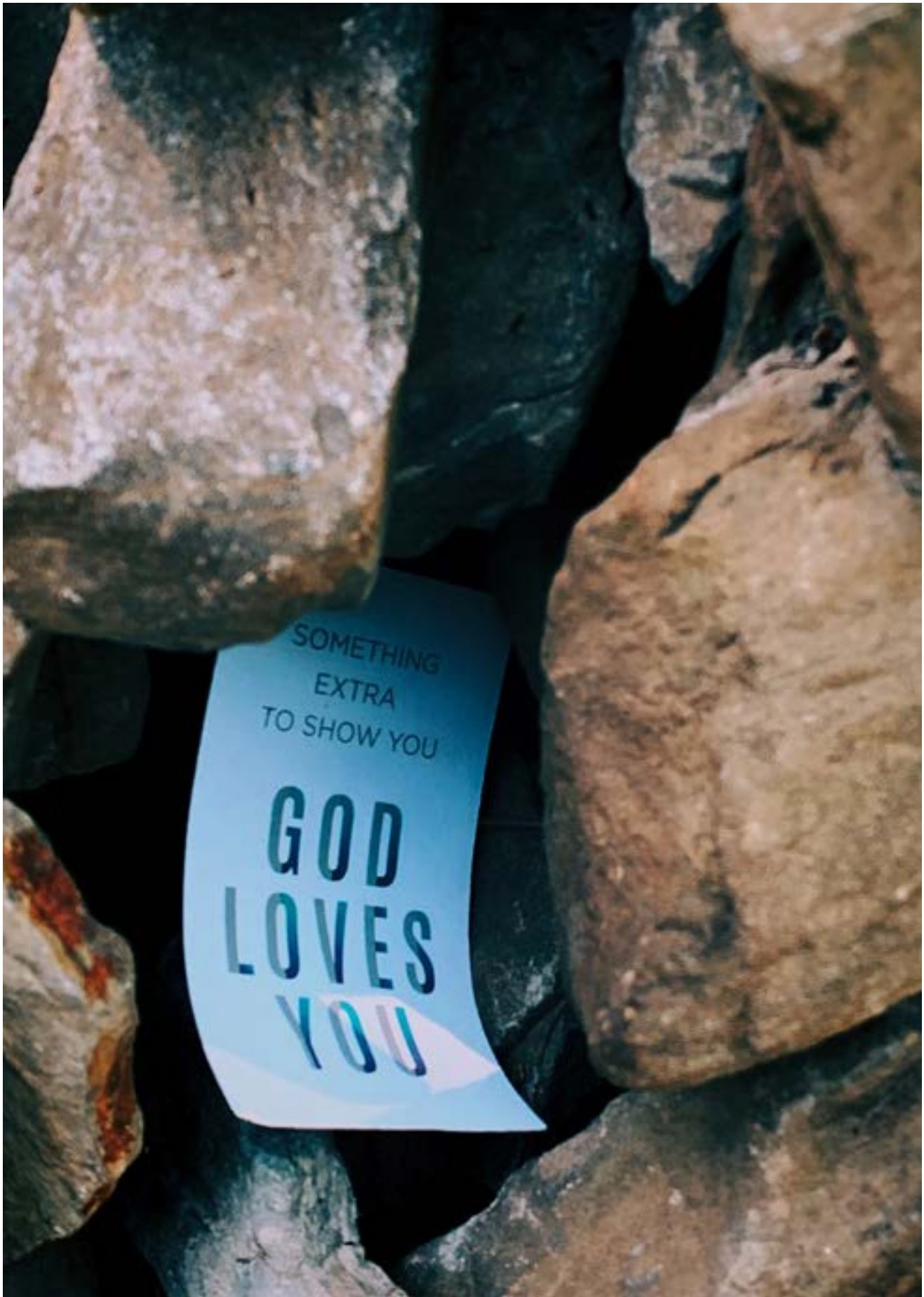


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UPCOMING EVENTS & PRAYER GUIDE

Gospel Operation International - Spring 2020

"Prayer plumes the wings of God's young eaglets so that they may learn to mount above the clouds. Prayer brings inner strength to God's warriors and sends them forth to spiritual battle with their muscles firm and their armor in place."

~ **Charles Spurgeon**

[CLICK HERE for the GOI Chinese Prayer guide \(中文\).](#)



COVID-19 RELIEF FUND

GOI started a COVID-19 Relief Fund to provide urgently needed food relief to impoverished communities in Lebanon, Uganda and Cambodia. (You can donate at <https://goimission.org/relief-fund/>). Please pray that God would preserve the communities we serve through the pandemic, the food insecurities they face because of the pandemic's economic fallout, and any social unrest that may result from the situation. Pray that God would move the hearts of the church to give to those in need.



FAR EAST CREATIVE ACCESS

Pray that COVID-19 will pass over God's people, just as in the time of the Passover. Pray for the strengthening of the churches as they persevere through increased government regulation and the challenges of the pandemic, that they might also enthusiastically accept God's invitation to join the work of global mission. Pray for all the foreign field workers who have returned back to their home countries, and for our local worker families who remain in the midst of the pandemic.



CAMBODIA

Pray for the four local churches planted by GOI (Huoshui, Xinguang, Meimen, and Ganquan) and the Chinese Ministry Grace Church, which is under our care. Pray for the Lord to send more missionaries to the field. There are needs in areas such as English language teaching, Chinese language teaching, kindergarten education, and community development. Please also pray for GOI's formal registration in Cambodia and the registration of the churches, which will be helpful for visa applications and the long-term development of the ministry. Pray for the co-workers who are undergoing language and cultural training.





THAILAND

Pray as the team goes through a period of transition. Pray for the field workers who are going on furlough, or are considering more permanent transitions on or off the field. Pray for wisdom for the new team leader as the team undergoes reorganization and strengthening. Pray for God to lead the right people to attend the adult and children's English learning classes, and for clarity of expression for the teachers. Pray for the families of our field workers, especially for elderly family members who need care, and for family members who are not yet believers. Pray for the language and cultural learning of new team members, especially ones who are preparing for formal end-of-year language proficiency exams.

SE ASIAN CREATIVE ACCESS

One field worker asked for prayers for of a couple (doctor and pharmacist); a restaurant owner (widow) and her three children; a young mother in a small shop; and a believing language teacher and his unchurched parents and sister. Pray for their encouragement, and salvation for those who do not yet know Christ. Pray for God to send the right co-workers to assist with the "Sheep Project." Pray that God will prepare a house suitable for housing and ministry needs. Pray for one missionary who has been experiencing severe blistering and cracking of his hands. Pray for the local church in this country and in surrounding countries to strengthen in discipleship and purity. Pray for the visa renewal process for our field workers, as it is difficult, expensive and urgently needed in some cases.

REFUGEE MINISTRY

A GOI field worker has been assigned to supervise 11 Refugee Learning Center teachers, and lead a team of co-workers in building the gospel in refugee communities. This worker will also teach dispersed mission training courses in churches and short mission teams. Two new local groups from the R people have invited us to their religious schools to set up an education system. Pray that God would prepare suitable teachers and volunteers. Pray for God's wisdom and protection for the field worker as he travels each day to ministry sites.



THE UKRAINE

Pray for God to use the Chinese, Russian, and English tutoring platform of the Odessa Chinese Church to meet new friends, build relationships, and share the gospel.



UGANDA

Praise the Lord for the January 11 opening of the new mission center. Pray that God would use this location to develop missionary work. Pray for new applicants to the FaithGarden community agricultural project, and for the preparation of a new list of students who will receive financial aid for their studies. Pray for the pastoral training program, which just launched a second class. Pray for the Biblical study and training program for youth leaders.



EURASIAN CREATIVE ACCESS

The number of pastoral couples from the Chinese Church has sharply declined recently, so GOI is grateful that a missionary from country C will serve the local Chinese Church for long-term. Please pray. Local field workers are grateful for God's care and supply over the past year. In December 2019, a total of 7 local friends attended the celebration party for the Bilingual Youth Meeting. Pray for the growth and development of our youth groups, and for more local friends to be drawn to them. One field worker asks for prayer as he considers tutoring local friends in English.





MEXICO

Praise God that a GOI partner church in Mexico City was able to complete the purchase of a building. Some GOI workers in Tijuana were forced by the pandemic to leave the field early. The local airport closed before they could leave, but God provided a way for them to transit the U.S.-Mexico border before the border also closed. Ultimately, the workers were able to fly to Toronto. Praise God for his leadership and protection, and for the help of believers in San Diego. Please pray for their future service in Latin America.



BRAZIL

Pray for the Rio Niteroi Church, which began Mandarin Sunday Services and spreading the gospel among Mandarin-speaking groups. Pray for the local lay leader and his wife. Pray for the relocation of the main church in Curitiba and for its local field worker. Praise God for His faithfulness over the past 20 years, when God was able to establish a Chinese church in São Paulo. Over the years, many people have come into contact with the gospel, and the fields are still ripe for harvest. The missionaries associated with that church were not able to renew their religious visas, so are now attempting to obtain work permits. Please pray that they would be able to obtain a new religious visa so they can return to Brazil as soon as possible.



PANAMA

GOI's missionaries decided to remain in Panama through the pandemic and continues to pastor the Chinese Baptist Church in Panama. Please pray for their daily life, service and health.





COLOMBIA

Pray for one GOI missionary couple who has left the field on an unpaid study leave in the United States. Pray for revival in the local church, that brothers and sisters would pursue spiritual growth and would be willing to take root in God's Word. Pray for God to give strength and wisdom for the current GOI missionary to arrange and develop outreach ministries, and for God to send more workers to assist in pastoral work.



BOLIVIA

Pray as GOI works to mobilize missionaries to establish a new long-term field in Bolivia. Praise God for the safe return of the recent GOI vision trip members who ministered to indigenous friends by boat along the river, and to the Chinese church in Santa Cruz. Pray for English language ministry teams, including a medical team, who are preparing to come to Bolivia after the pandemic to serve in poor communities.



CANADA

The Eastern Canada Youth Winter Meeting was held in Jackpoint, north of Toronto, from February 14 to 17. The keynote speaker was Dr. Yeou-Cherng Bor, Executive Director of Ambassadors for Christ, and about 200 young people attended. Please pray for the upcoming Follow-up Camp in July and the Cross-cultural Vision Trip in October.





UNITED STATES

Due to the pandemic, the U.S.A. GOI office has had to cancel or postpone many activities, including three short term missions teams, several mission courses, mission prayer meetings, etc. Only one person remains in the office each day, in compliance with local regulations, affecting daily administrative operations. Please pray for God's peace during this global pandemic, for the operation of all GOI regional offices, and for the missionaries on the front lines.



HONG KONG

The Hong Kong Office had set up a number of activities to celebrate GOI's 25th anniversary this year, but the pandemic has made all future scheduling uncertain. Please pray for Hong Kong as we persevere through the pandemic.



TAIWAN

The Taiwan office held its Board of Supervisors and General Assembly meetings in March, where an Area Council and a Chairman were elected to represent Taiwan on the International Board of Directors. Praise God for the election of godly, God-loving, insightful, confident, committed church leaders to serve on the GOI Taiwan committee. Pray that they would have a wonderful term with the Taiwan office for the next three years.





THE PHILIPPINES

Pray for the Philippines regional office's efforts to reach and mobilize Christians, especially English-speaking believers.



MACAU

Please continue to pray for Pastor Steven Lai who is still in a deep coma. Also, please pray for the preparations for the GOI 25th Anniversary Celebration.



AUSTRALIA

Please pray for wisdom in dealing with the rescheduling of the various gatherings during the epidemic.







MALAYSIA

A brother from the Penang Christian Mission Centre recently began a two-year missionary internship. Pray that God would give him good health, a good spiritual life, and blessings to lead him in his local studies and ministry. Pray for the wife of the Malaysia regional office, who is facing a life-threatening health condition. Pray that God will heal her; give her strength in body, mind and spirit; and give her peace and joy.



SINGAPORE

Please pray for wisdom in dealing with the rescheduling of the various gatherings during the epidemic.



HEADQUARTERS OFFICE

Pray for our International Director and headquarters staff. Pray for the plans and preparations to open a mission center in Argentina, and pray for God to mobilize the right field workers for the work. The center's ministry will include evangelism training and leadership training, Spanish mission promotion, and short term missions. Please pray for the blessings of God on the missionaries who are in process towards fully deploying on the field. Pray that God will support them as they study, and keep them safe and well-funded.



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