

Clemente Newsletter

October 2020

He Is At Work

What surprises you? Are you startled to see that the mountain trail is not straight? Did you not expect the winter to be colder? Are you astonished with the hardships you are facing nowadays?

The Bible tells us to “not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you” (1 Peter 4:12. ESV). We should not feel as though something strange is happening to us. Peter states that we should rejoice because we have the opportunity to share in the suffering of Jesus. Does this spiritual truth surprise you?

Last week I was on a video call with Pastor A. from South Asia. He reported that Pastor S. from R-district is moving “freely” in the villages, sharing the gospel and praying for the sick. These last few months of the Covid pandemic, five people were baptized and their weekly fellowship grew from ten people to twenty-five persons. What is strange about this video call report?

We often assume that because of lockdown, quarantine, remote work, and other restrictions, the work of God is on hold. Not so in South Asia. My pastor friend continues his report: 20 baptisms from Pastor U. and one new church plant near Bear-jet village; 10 baptisms from Pastor P; three decisions for Christ from Pastor S. from the eastern regions. God is at work in Asia. These pastors are not surprised with the difficulties brought about by the pandemic. Yes, they are suffering. Some of them are probably starving because delivery of food and other basic services are limited. And yet, they continue to share the gospel and serve our God.

Are we surprised that these hardships are upon us? What “trials” are you experiencing during these months of restrictions and physical distancing? Can we say with Peter that God is at work in our communities? Are you rejoicing in the midst of your pain and difficult life experiences? Let us read Peter’s admonition again.

“Friends, when life gets really difficult, don’t jump to the conclusion that God isn’t on the job. Instead, be glad that you are in the very thick of what Christ experienced. This is a spiritual refining process, with glory just around the corner.” (1 Peter 4:12. MSG) “Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good” (1 Peter 4:19. ESV).

Country-N Update

We have 280 plus local churches in Country-N who are partnering with us across 16 districts and from 13 different languages and tribal communities. God’s work in South Asia Country-N is moving forward.

Consider this summary report from our FM partners for the month of September: 30 persons baptized, 10 children dedicated, 10 youth joining a discipleship class; one new church plant, several first time decisions for Christ, and small groups are multiplying. God is at work in Asia.

Did you hear about our Superintendent's summary report from July? There were 12 people who made first time decisions to come to Christ, three persons who were baptized, and many small house fellowships were started in different districts. Moving forward despite the Covid pandemic.

These are the only figures I have in record. We do not know what other things the Spirit of God is doing beyond our eyesight and outside our ways of recording data. One thing is for sure: God is at work in Country N.

A recent study put out by the Center For Global Christianity stated that the highest growth rate of Christianity in the world is in Country N. This study documented data from 1970 to 2020. God is working in Country N and we need to participate in God's work.

Join me in praying and supporting Free Methodist work in Country N. We have plans of sending more teachers in theology to help our church leaders. We are looking into the purchase of a sizable property to be used as a ministry center for our many partners. We are training more Asian church planters. We are helping local families by sponsoring their children through International Child Care Ministries (ICCM). We are following God's lead. Are you ready to participate in God's work?

I would like to hear from you. Please write me back when you hear God leading you to pray and support our FM work in South Asia. If you prefer to give toward a specific area of concern, you are most welcome to do so.

Areas of concern are the following: (1) sending teachers; (2) purchase of a property for a ministry center; (3) training of pastors and church planters; and (4) child sponsorship ministry.

In the months ahead, I will be visiting your communities and sharing God's work in Asia. Please open the doors of your homes and your churches. If you have small groups who are interested in hosting my visit, please share the contents of this piece of missions news. I am asking that you will be generous with your giving, compassionate with your prayers, and joyful with your hospitality and friendship.

Kids Corner

In August, our family enjoyed a beautiful eight hour drive to Wilmore, Kentucky to send Carmen off to college at Asbury University. We moved her into the dorm right across the street from Asbury Seminary where David and I met, and just down the road from the house we lived in when Carmen was born. It felt like we had come full circle. Please continue to pray for both Carmen and Jacob as they navigate new schools, new friends, and a new culture during this "new normal".

Faithful Finances

Praise God for His provision through the faithful giving of our partners in ministry! Please pray for this time of Partnership Building as we share about God's work in Asia, explain our roles in this work, and seek new prayer and financial supporters.

It is estimated that our budget will increase by 15% for the year 2021. This means we will need to raise an additional \$1500 per month. Please pray with us as church boards, missions committees, and families meet to discuss and make decisions about missions giving for this coming year.

Prayers and Praises

*****Thank God for a productive meeting with Pastor Jim and Pastor Ron this month. We are still planning to visit Country-N sometime next year, when the situation allows us to travel. Please continue to pray for the preparations.

*****David will have an opportunity to visit Barryton and Ewart this month. Pray that this limited time will produce good results for God's work in Asia. Pray for safe travel from Illinois to Michigan.

*****Pastor A's landlord needs the property for a family member and has asked Pastor A to move out. Please pray as he searches for a new place for his family to live. Their home functions as the place of worship for one of our city churches. Pray that the relocation will not hinder the ministry of the church.

*****Thank God for leading us these past few months and providing for our needs through the kindness and generosity of family, friends, and even strangers. Pray that we can get to know our neighbors and classmates even as we're being careful during this time of social distancing.

God bless you!

David and Sarah Clemente

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