

Sent: Monday, 23 March 2020

Hello all,

I had intended to send out a full newsletter in March, and maybe that will yet happen, but with the fast-changing world we are all living in at the moment, a short prayer update seemed a more appropriate form of communication.

I returned from the village on March 10, and the summary of my seven weeks working in Gulf Province is that they were good, challenging and tiring, but overall good. I'll give more details when I get to writing that newsletter!

In the two weeks since I returned, the world has changed dramatically as the Covid-19 situation has unfolded. Each day has had more cases, and more announcements by authorities and governments. In the midst of this, my colleagues and I each had to make the decision about where we will go through this storm. I don't think there is any avoiding it, so it is a decision about where and with whom. I have chosen to stay in Papua New Guinea.

This was not a decision made lightly, but one made with lots of prayer, as well as by consulting my family and trusted people who understand the situation in PNG. I recognise that there is a risk in staying on in a country with limited health resources, and as borders close, the likelihood of no medivac options. There is also a risk that as the virus takes its toll, the social situation will become unstable.

I have chosen to stay here in Ukarumpa, PNG, as this is my home place now. Here is where I have a house and a community. I already live alone and work from home, so maintaining distance is not difficult. This is a good community, and already I have seen how people can shine in the hard times, by coming together to help each other. I trust our leadership team and our crisis management team to act in informed, prayerful, wise and non-fearful ways.

Please pray for PNG, that the actions of the government, in closing international borders, and now shutting down domestic travel, will contain the virus. Pray for wisdom for leadership in this time, at all levels. Pray for the medical workers of PNG, as they face a virus causing turmoil in developed nations, and do their best to prepare for it in this developing nation. Pray for my community, both in Ukarumpa, in the Aiyura Valley (where Ukarumpa is located), and in Papua New Guinea, that at this time, people may act from love and not from fear.

Yesterday we said farewell (maybe...the situation keeps changing!) and thank you to a couple who have worked in PNG for forty years and six months. This means they arrived in the 70s, and are leaving in the 20s!! Together we sang:

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my father,
there is no shadow of turning with thee,
Thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not
As thou hast been, thou forever wilt be.

Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see!
All I have needed, thy hand has provided
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

These are words to hold onto in these turbulent times. God is faithful through all that is happening, even though we cannot see two steps ahead, and the way seems dark and fearful. I pray that each day, you can see God's mercies in your life, that each day, you can see how God is providing for you through all that is happening. God is still in control, even when I don't understand what is happening.

Blessings
Hanna