

Dear Praying Friend,

As of this morning, Austria is on lock-down. With few exceptions, we are not supposed to leave our homes; we are forbidden to gather in groups of more than 5 people; even going on walks is discouraged and may not be with another person unless you live in the same household. With the exception of pharmacies, grocery stores, gas stations, and other “necessary” shops, all stores and businesses are closed.

Yesterday it was my turn to preach in our church. The passage was from John 3 – Jesus and Nicodemus. Since the gathering was canceled, I recorded the message from my office at home and it was posted online. The church community was invited to have a time of family worship in our respective homes. I was so encouraged to receive a number of emails and text messages from members in our church family, thanking me for the message, some including a short video of those gathered for worship. While rejoicing over the way we are able to use technology in these difficult times, our hearts went out to those who are alone. I know many of you who are introverts are having fun with “social distancing,” and it is certainly very good for us extroverts to be forced to spend time alone with God. On the other hand, on-going isolation can lead to alienation, both of which are great dangers for the people of God. Ironically, in my Bible reading yesterday, the assigned passage included Hebrews 10:24-35 – “And let us watch out for one another ..., not neglecting to gather together, ...but encouraging each other...” Finding ways to obey this command in times like these is a challenge for us all.

Thank you for praying for us, especially for the two “sticky leadership issues” I am currently dealing with. I have been encouraged to see important progress this past month in both areas, though more is needed. Please continue to pray for wisdom and good solutions, both short and long-term.

As you can imagine, our recent season of many guests and lots of travel has abruptly ended for a time. It has been replaced with office time, Skype calls, and virtual meetings. Two planned trips to Romania and the Czech Republic this week and next, respectively, have been postponed. God has granted us time to be still, as well as time to get a number of critical projects done. I am thinking especially of my BAO research and articles I am writing for possible publication. Discipling others, the joy of our ministry, will have to continue via calls and emails. Even small groups will be meeting virtually.

Finally, I wanted to give you a little bit of information regarding our planned HMA (“home ministry assignment”) in the fall. Lord willing (and that is no cliché), Lynette and I will be in the US from August 13 through October 21. The schedule (tentatively) is as follows:

- Aug. 13-16 – in Baltimore with Erik and Bri
- Aug. 16-24 – in Orange County, CA
- Aug. 24 – Sept. 5 – in northern California
- Sept. 5 – Oct. 3 – in Orange County, CA
- (Sept. 13-17 – Jim in Colorado Springs)
- Oct. 3-19 – in Chicagoland, ILL
- Oct. 19-21 – in Baltimore

This is a short HMA and we want to use the time as effectively as possible, seeing as many of you as the Lord allows. Please pray as we work out the details of housing and transportation in each location. If any of you are aware of possibilities, please let us know. Also, please contact us about getting on the “schedule”. We love being with you.

Thank you for your love and encouragement. We pray for you as you for us. In Christ,

Jim and Lynette

P.S. Thank you for praying for Kristiana, Cory, and the girls. No news yet about the appeal of their visa application rejection. We'll let you know.

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