

## Mission partner news updates and prayer requests, October 2020

### Ruslan Telpiz, Moldova

The new kitchen in the church in Gotesti has been completed and the Day Care Centre has resumed a programme of after-school activities inside the church building, led by Larisa. Work is nearing completion to provide indoor toilets and washbasins, to comply with the government's Covid regulations.

A new group for teenagers has started in the church. Three pizza evenings have been popular and have enabled young people from the church to invite their non-church friends. English classes for adults have also started in the church. Ruslan does a Bible study before each lesson and he is pleased to have this opportunity to witness to the non-church goers attending the English classes.

The drought continues. Shops still have food supplies but the future is uncertain. For winter heating, many people use briquettes made from the stalks and leaves left over after harvesting cereal crops and sweetcorn and from sunflower seeds. However, the failed harvest means this inexpensive fuel for fires will be in short supply this winter. Other types of fuel are expensive. Village residents are fearful of the long, cold winter ahead, unable to afford food and fuel. Many people in Moldova have lost their jobs this year because of Covid restrictions. Ruslan is busier than ever, with the new opportunities for ministry that Covid has opened up and there is an increased interest in the gospel.

#### Prayer requests:

- For Ruslan to always have a vision for ministry and to be able to encourage those around him to look to the Lord at all times.
- To be able to provide practical help to those in greatest need.
- For the children from socially vulnerable families who are attending the Day Care Centre.
- For the new areas of ministry – youth group and English classes for adults.



### Network Counselling and Training

It has been a busy summer at Network. They have been truly blessed with remarkable financial support from individuals, churches (including St Michael's of course!), Trusts and Foundations and the Government's ring-fenced money for charities. They are now delivering counselling and training as usual, and working hard to expand and develop their work to meet the growing need for quality, affordable mental health support.

Counselling has been happening almost entirely remotely, via phone or internet, and since the summer they have been providing more sessions than the year previously. Demand for training is also very high, as many people have realised the importance of counselling, and have perhaps had more space to hear their calling to the profession.

"I've been able to process things more over the last, very unusual, six weeks or so. I can recognize that counselling helped me to take a more balanced view of the world. Relationships are easier and I am more at peace. I would recommend counselling - and Network - to anyone." A client in lockdown

#### Prayer Points:

- That more volunteer counsellors come to work with them, and they create a healing space for their clients.
- That they are able to share Network's work more widely – to clients, to students, and across the Christian community in Bristol.
- That the team are held by God, and can draw on God's wisdom in this time of ongoing change.



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### Peace and Hope Trust

Nicaraguans are struggling with the effects of COVID but with little government support. The Ministry of Health is under-equipped to deal with the pandemic and is requiring residents to pay for their own expensive tests. Peace and Hope Trust is hoping a community health centre can be built in the same region as their schools to help improve local healthcare. Big border controls due to the pandemic are placing a colossal constraint on trade and movement of people, affecting local businesses badly. Nicaraguan government constraints on activities of foreign-funded NGOs are causing frustration to the Trust, preventing them sending containers of donated equipment and other aid this year and into 2021. As a result, the Trust is stockpiling in their UK warehouses a large amount of urgently needed hospital equipment, awaiting easing of the import rules in Nicaragua. Richard Geary, (Project Manager/Field Director of Peace and Hope Trust), is currently on loan to Operation Christmas Child for the coming months and is helping to set up and run the processing centres for the 2020 Samaritan's Purse shoebox appeal. This is an exciting role as last year 400,000 shoe boxes were sent abroad and through the programme more than 80,000 children became followers of Jesus.

#### Prayer Requests:

- Praise that Peace and Hope Trust is benefitting from some great Samaritan's Purse excess equipment
- Pray that the Nicaraguan government will reduce import restrictions to enable the stockpile of equipment held by Peace and Hope Trust in the UK to soon reach its destination.
- Pray for the plans to construct a new health centre near the Peace and Hope Trust schools to be able to go ahead next year
- Pray for COVID to diminish and for the effective reopening of borders to enable the economy to begin to recover
- Pray for Richard Geary in his busy extra role with Samaritan's Purse



### Upcott

The last months were supposed to be a time of trialling new ideas for the Trust. Instead the pandemic has caused the work of Upcott to be catapulted into a period of sustained growth. It is possibly the most exciting time for the Trust in the last 20 years. We have had 15-20 hours direct contact online each week with young people. The groups quickly evolved, as the point of contact between the real needs of the young people and the vision of the Trust emerged. And what emerged was not a surprise: Upcott's core strength and role is to enable young people to have a vibrant relationship with Jesus that is outworked on a daily basis.

During May half term history was made by holding the first ever online week. In August we ran Ignite (age 17-18) and Involve (age 14-16). Our aim was to replicate, as much as possible, a normal morning on an Upcott week - worship, teaching and discussion. The afternoons were kept free to save overloading with Zoom. We used some of the evening sessions for games, taskmaster, murder mystery, big quiz, pictionary etc. and other sessions for prayer and ministry. The weeks were successful although they looked different. It is a steep learning curve and there is much to be changed and improved in order to run weeks online in the future.

#### Prayer Requests:

- That the sale of The Beacon will be completed.
- For the young people who have gone off to university.
- For the young people who attended Zooms this year, that their relationship with Jesus would continue to develop.
- For wisdom as we plan the next 12 months.



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### inHope

inHope have been adapting to new ways of working during the pandemic. Spring of Hope had to close at the start of the pandemic. Val and Trudy have been keeping in touch with clients and supporting vulnerable women by phone and online, which can be very wearing and exhausting. A priority is working with other city-wide agencies to access move-on accommodation. They are hoping to find a Covid-safe way to re-open the women's night shelter in the future.

The Wild Goose is nearing the completion of the refurbishment and staff and volunteers are planning for safe ways to re-open. Meanwhile the pop-up in the chapel next door continues to feed up to 100 people daily with a hot lunch, hot drinks and snacks to take away.

Life Recovery courses are still happening - online was successful, the in-person course was oversubscribed as numbers had to be limited. There is still great demand.

The East Bristol Foodbank is working out of three sites, delivering food parcels to homes instead of people collecting. Although this is safer at this time, it means people are not able to access the further support that was previously on offer. Demand doubled at the start of the pandemic.

A new way for people to make donations is the partnership with The Hope Revolution <https://www.hope-revolution.org/inhope> which provides a way for supporters to order the items needed, reducing the numbers of people dropping donations off at Carpenter House during the pandemic.

The Bristol Churches Winter Night Shelter is looking at ways of reopening in a Covid-safe way, with individual B&B rooms and volunteers onsite in a communal area.

#### Prayer requests:

- Give thanks for donations received to keep operating, and for creativity of staff, trustees and volunteers as they develop new ways of working, also for the construction workers who continued with the refurbishment of the Wild Goose.
- Pray for health and strength of staff and volunteers
- Pray for homeless people and those in danger of becoming homeless



### Sarah Sutton – Tonypandy

Hope Church Rhondda has been meeting on Sundays for two months in limited numbers. It is encouraging that new people have joined the church since lockdown. The church foodbank is having a big increase in demand but it is good that the church can supply that need.

Clwb Coffi started well and is greatly appreciated by locals, many of whom have become regulars with whom Sarah and John are developing good relationships. Recent Covid regulations affected what they could do such as church events, but it was good they could host a local Chamber of Trade meeting at which they met many other business owners. Due to Welsh lockdown restrictions they are now having to shut for 2 weeks.

They have just employed a great new staff member and are applying to a Welsh government scheme to employ a funded young person struggling to find employment. Clwb Coffi has had some exciting mentions in 3 local media papers.

#### Prayer Requests:

- Pray for financial protection during the Welsh circuit break lockdown
- Even though their vision of church events cannot yet happen, pray that what Sarah and John are doing will impact people and that they will want to go to church.
- Pray for creative ideas to reach the community during lockdown
- Sarah is expecting a baby in April - pray for Sarah and John as they prepare for that and for good health.



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### Epaphras: El-Shaddai Bible School, India

El-Shaddai Bible School is going well. There are 20 students currently. They have 3 classes each morning where the students explore the Bible with teaching staff. The aim is to develop their Christian character so they can disciple and teach others. Each afternoon they have vocational training in areas such as IT and learning to use sewing machines. They plan to extend the vocational training to include other skills in the next few months, with an aim of helping them become self-reliant in the future. Currently the students have a busy schedule as they also have reading and assignments to prepare, as well as other responsibilities in the school. The students enjoy healthy and nutritious food each day and have games and sports events as part of their physical training. The school aims to develop students holistically and to help them follow God's plans for their lives.

#### Prayer Requests:

**Praise & Thanksgiving:** Please praise God with the school for:

- Teachers & staff.
- Conducive atmosphere to learn.
- Facility and necessary equipment to provide such training.
- Love, unity and sense of togetherness.
- Faithful provisions.



**Prayer requests:** Please pray with the school for:

- Additional books and commentaries in the library.
- Sense of freedom to serve these young students.
- Obedient hearts to live, serve and comply as per the law of the land.
- Grace and favour in the eyes of God and in the eyes of men to fulfil our God given responsibilities.

### The Brickworks

The Brickworks continues to support church led projects in South Sudan and in refugee camps in Uganda. They support four schools in refugee camps managed by the Diocese of KajoKeji which has been in exile since 2017 due to civil war. The schools are just re-opening after being closed due to COVID. For the last few months the schools have been working with pupils in small numbers to cultivate in order to sell fresh food to local residents, thus not only are the pupils learning important skills but are also raising money for the schools. Discipleship training for youth in small numbers has been able to continue, as well as finance management training for church treasurers. Also, in Uganda, support has continued for theology students at Bishop Allison Theological College which is still in exile.

Meanwhile in Yei, South Sudan The Brickworks continues to support church Primary Schools which are slowly re-opening now, having been closed since March. The Martha Clinic in Yei continues to be busy and, due to high inflation, the patients cannot pay as much as they used to for treatment. People are finding it too expensive to buy enough food. Malnutrition rates are rising, making people more vulnerable to disease. The Brickworks is currently paying staff salaries and supplying medicines and PPE to enable the clinic to continue to function. The logistics for this are challenging as the border has been closed due to COVID and the medicines are sourced in Uganda. The border opened last week but the rain has been torrential making the mud roads impassable to vehicles. A recent large consignment of medicines and spectacles arrived safely - for which the clinic is very grateful.



#### Prayer Requests:

- That COVID does not have a second spike so schools can stay open in camps and Yei
- That the rain reduces so transportation improves for easier food and medicine delivery to Yei
- For inflation and insecurity to decrease so people have better access to affordable food
- For the churches that they can reach out to their communities to share God's love in these hard times

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### Univida

The proposed solar project means they will really be able to make a long-term difference in a difficult year. It is hoped the work will be completed before the children return to school in January.

There seems to be another increase in Covid-19 in the peripheral areas of Fortaleza again (which includes their area). There are lots of mixed feelings about wearing masks so people are confused and stressed about that in the slums.

At the end of October they are handing out learning packs for 100 of our students in years 2, 3 and 4. This means they will have some brief contact time with the children and a parent as they come in to collect their pack, which includes stationary, activities, reading and quizzes.

#### Prayer requests:

- For the economic situation. Food inflation in Fortaleza is over 9% this year and obviously there is a lot of unemployment. Even for those with a minimum wage, food is getting very expensive. Extreme poverty is rising fast.
- For safety. The factions have been very active trying to gain territory in new areas and are fighting each other. Some of the national gang leaders have bizarrely been released from prison.
- For health and protection and for parents and children to be encouraged in their faith.



### SIITA Nest

Uganda managed to keep Coronavirus levels low for several months, but this has been very hard on the population with food shortages and many family difficulties. The younger children in Bugembe have been learning at the Home with members of the team, led by a teacher who was a former SIITA Nest child. Those preparing for national exams have received additional help from some of the SIITA Nest school teachers who have been coming to the Home. The children who have had to return to Sironko have been learning from 'radio lessons' - there has been a national initiative to distribute free radios to families as part of a 'long-distance education programme' while schools were closed.

Since September the number of Coronavirus cases has been rising and Alice reports that *"since it has spread into communities, the government has declared that it can no longer manage the situation, so now it is about survival for the fittest. We need your prayers in this area and now that our children are going back to school in October we do not know how things will be."*

Furthermore, it is going to be difficult for some schools to re-open because of the raft of protective measures required, including medical personnel, two temperature guns, masks, washing facilities in each class room, sanitisers and social distancing measures. Similar requirements are needed in the home but those have been supplied.

The Heart of the Community project in Sironko continues to progress, albeit slowly, but it does seem to be a large building! The walls have been rendered and gutters put up which will give the additional protection needed from the rain. The electrics have been installed and internal plastering is underway.

#### Prayer Requests:

- For an improvement to food supplies, particularly in north and east Uganda (specifically the Sironko area) where a combination of floods, locusts and Covid have caused enormous hardship
- That SIITA Nest will be able to afford the PPE to keep the home and school functioning
- For protection from Covid for the team and the children



**b.friend**

It's been a very tough time for the befriended as some of the usual services that they access for support have been closed since lockdown, leading to a greater isolation than before. This has meant that those who were already matched with befrienders in March have benefited from the continued regular support over the phone and then in person once this was permitted.

*The Craft Collective:* Meeting at St Stephen's Church had to stop temporarily due to lockdown, but the women now work from home! There is now a mask making project and their masks are available to buy on the Bridges for Communities website; Angie, the new co-ordinator, is planning to invite a new group of women to the group who are beginners to sewing, which as time goes on will give them good basic skills.

*Alice and H:* Alice was recently matched with H, a Sudanese woman who is a single parent. She has refugee status and was accommodated in Stoke Gifford through Home Choice. Her husband is currently stuck in Sudan because the British Embassy is closed and his papers for joining his family here cannot be processed - this is really tough for H... Alice and H have got off to a great start and hope to plan some nice trips together.

*Mike and C:* C is from Chad and has been in Bristol for 2 years. He is seeking asylum but has also been pursuing a trafficking claim. He struggles with PTSD and manages his mental health through exercise. He and Mike are planning on doing some long bike rides together.



**Prayer Requests:**

- Pray for befriended who feel isolated and for whom telephone calls are difficult, especially those with poor English language skills.
- Give thanks for the Craft Collective and the positive input that it can make in the present situation through the making of masks. Pray for the new women joining the group.
- Pray for encouragement for befriended like H – some have to wait for several years before their status is settled. Pray for befrienders like Alice to be a blessing to their befriended and for friendships to deepen.

**Jimmy Rocks**

In September the family moved into their new apartment after a stressful season of overseeing work being done there. They have settled well and they are enjoying the new space, giving Jimmy an office to work from and the kids adequate space to do home schooling including online lessons. The COVID situation appears to have stabilised in Florianópolis, and is falling in much of Brazil after being the global epicentre. The children are due back at school in February after their summer break. With elections for cities' mayors and local governments coming up there is little political will for further lockdowns.

The church is having meetings with social distancing measures and simultaneously streaming those services for folk at risk. Over the last six weeks or so they have seen God's Spirit moving powerfully in their meetings and they are in a position to start dreaming and planning together after a lot of uncertainty due to the pandemic and COVID restrictions. They are planning more evangelism as their summer approaches and for the New Wine Discipleship School/Year they will run at the church, with many young people wishing to enrol on it and much external interest as well.

**Prayer requests:**

- Give thanks for God's goodness to the family and for what He is doing in the life of the church.
- For God's provision as they seek to extend His kingdom through outreach and discipleship.
- For the preparations for the New Wine Discipleship School.

