

Dear Friends and Family,

We're sorry for the delay in writing a new update, but as you will see below – it has been a wild year!

How much can happen in one year? For those of us living in Hong Kong, quite a lot. Since this time last year, most people living in Hong Kong probably feel like their world has been turned upside down. We're thankful for the Lord's protection and peace during this restive season, and for the proof of the promise that He 'will never leave us nor forsake us.'

Around this time last year, political tensions (that have been simmering for years) broke out into marches that saw millions of people in the streets, and eventually devolved into violent clashes and a temporary takeover of government facilities. At times our church in the city had to cancel services due to safety concerns, and at times we had friends and members fleeing teargas or mobs. Portions of the two universities Jonathan spends time in were sieged, torched, and shutdown. When that season of political unrest died down, it was clear that the mainland government would respond strongly – even though (and probably partly because) outside governments were increasingly outspoken about events here.

At the end of January, Catherine's parents were able to come for a visit during the Chinese New Year holiday. We were so excited to have Dr. and Mrs. Reese and truly enjoyed our time spent with them. However, about half-way through their visit, a local rumor – about a new illness like those Hong Kong had experienced before (SARS; Swine Flu) – turned out to be true, and we became one of the first areas to experience what would become the COVID-19 pandemic. Catherine's parents decided to cut their visit a few days short and return to the US, as flights were starting to be canceled and the virus was starting to spread. Since Hong Kong had experienced the earlier outbreaks of other fast-spreading viruses, the city responded very quickly and very aggressively. The government issued an order to close schools for a few weeks longer. Catherine and the children, along with the other teachers and students at her school had to very quickly switch to the daunting challenge of on-line learning. A few weeks extended from one month to two, and eventually four months! Catherine and the children spent February-May doing their schoolwork online, the same as many have had to do around the world. It was quite challenging. Catherine's teaching responsibilities created long hours working at home preparing lessons and also helping Steven, Lucy, and Nicholas with their work. We were quite relieved when school was called back into session at the end of May. God was so good to allow them to return to school to complete the school year, although it was only for a few weeks before the end of the year. They returned having to go through temperature checks, wearing face masks, and only half-day sessions, but they were really happy to be back with their friends and teachers again.

During this time, our church activities and even normal work routines were suspended again, and we switched to online services and learning how to do livestreams and uploaded videos. By the way, you can see many of our services and devotionals by searching YouTube for Island Baptist Church Hong Kong. During this time, we sought to renegotiate our church's rent (which

was around 20,000.00 HKD higher than surrounding properties), and decided it was best for us to look for a new location. We had to pack up the church and then literally return the church space back to the landlord as a bare shell (see picture at the end). Renting a temporary spot has turned out to be a great blessing, as we are able to be flexible during on-and-off cancelations. As many people expected, the authorities chose this season of illness to remedy the political unrest in Hong Kong: in the recent months the mainland government has changed the law in our special region to become fully in line with the rest of the country. What this means is that in political and national issues, there will be no tolerance for the type of political unrest or political slogans that were used. Violations of those rules will bring serious and immediate consequences. We are thankful that our church had always avoided being 'political', and Jonathan has always taught our members to avoid violence and respect the authorities (in keeping with Romans 13 and other biblical principles), and we don't expect any persecution of churches like ours. Furthermore, assuming the world situation doesn't deteriorate, we actually expect the days ahead to be relatively stable due to the new laws. For those of you who are our long-term supporters, in one aspect our situation is a bit like living in the mainland, where we began our ministries – in the aspect that there are some political topics which are now 'off limits'. Unlike that previous season of ministry, Hong Kong (for now) still retains many other freedoms and a unique status which we allow us to continue ministering to the people of the city and surrounding Asia.

Whew! Now that we've given you that 'mini' summary of the last season (it could be much longer – write Jonathan for more details!), we hope that you'll be able to understand part of how challenging the last half-year has been for us. We're sorry for not sending out these updates as often as we should, but we're thankful for your patience, interest, prayers, and support. During this season we have had numerous chances to share the Gospel, not only in our Sunday services, but in Friday studies, Saturday outreaches, and the follow-up to campus ministries. Among the highlights has been a once former atheist who now believes the Bible is true, and is close to personal faith in Christ – pray for his salvation (let's call him "H") and for many of these long-term commitments. We have also had two young men surrender for ministry, and Jonathan is helping them with their training. As you know from previous updates, another bright spot on the horizon is the soon arrival of the Herbster family to help in Hong Kong. Praise the Lord, amidst all the craziness of life here, their visas were approved (on the very day our national laws changed!), and they are arranging their travel plans to come. Throughout all of this, we can truly say that God is our Helper and Friend- a Sustainer in the midst of a challenging time. We appreciate your prayers for our family, and know that we are praying for you as well.

In Christ,  
The Johnson Family  
Jonathan, Catherine, Steven, Lucy, and Nicholas

(Please see the next page for a few prayer requests and pictures)

**Prayer requests:**

- Health and safety of Island Baptist Church members
- The people of Hong Kong and opportunities to share the gospel with them
- Location of a new place for IBC to meet
- Herbster family and their transition to Hong Kong

**Support Address:**

**E.O.T.E.M.  
PO Box 4574,  
Beeville, TX 78104**

**Contact (We would love to hear from you!):**

**johnsonsinchina@gmail.com**

**Jonathan preaching online**



**IBC temporary meeting place**



**IBC Move!**

