

Dear Friends,

Hello from the hotspot of Hong Kong! We say ‘hotspot’, because – as you may have read in the news – Hong Kong has lately become Asia’s fastest growing outbreak of COVID cases and deaths. What makes this all the more remarkable is that for two and a half years, our region had prided itself on ‘zero cases’ while much of the rest of the world had relatively high numbers. All that has changed, and as we write you, we are again in shutdowns and lockdowns. Schools are meeting online (five of us are ‘Zooming’ in our apartment) and churches are also unable to meet, so we livestream to YouTube and host Zoom prayer meetings. In fact, we have just all had COVID ourselves, and Jonathan still has it at the time of this writing.

“...ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” Heb.10:36

The theme of this prayer update is ‘patience’, or ‘endurance’, a need of which we have been continuously reminded during this season. Below, we will share a few words about how the Lord’s work is marching along here in Hong Kong, and of the privilege and joys we have to be serving Him here. But before we do, we would like to share our hearts with you in order for you to better pray for our family. As you can guess from reading our opening above, this has been a challenging few years for Hong Kong. Beginning in 2019, Hong Kong was rocked by protests and social unrest that divided families and split many communities. You will remember our church closed a number of times due to damage to our transport and teargas in our streets. Schools also closed, and that time signaled the end of a ‘light handed’ approach from the government across the border. Arrests and crackdowns followed, and then respite from the unrest arrived with the news



Elderly Centre outreach – song service

of an ‘novel’ virus that was being reported just north of us here. The rest is history – 2020, 2021, and now 2022 has seen us enduring rolling lockdowns and shutdowns, for schools, businesses, and churches. Our church, Island Baptist, has endured a shutdown, move, renovation, and reopening all during this season. Our family has moved house as well.

Because of the way our church and school schedules have aligned with these shutdowns, our family has been unable to travel home to the US together for over 5 years. We are thankful that these years have been overflowing with opportunities and service during that time, but we of course also miss our churches and families in the United States. As a result of this unusual situation – high stress and high activity here in HK, absence from the US – we’re sorry our communication with you hasn’t been as frequent as it should be. Here in HK we interact with 5 educational email accounts (3 universities, 1 Bible institute, 1 grade school) and the church accounts (which now include social media), so we have a hard time keeping track of our correspondence. **That being said, if you are able to send us a WhatsApp or text message, please do – it is the easiest way to connect in a hurry. Our numbers here will be below our sign off. Further, now that we are all familiar with video-calls, we would love to connect with you by a call or chat.** Do please pray for us to have an opportunity to visit the US in the near future.



Rock climbing with youth – no masks!

Lastly, if you have been watching the news lately in Hong Kong, you may know that thousands of people are leaving the city temporarily or permanently. Over the space of the last month, we have seen one missionary leave permanently, and two missionary families leave temporarily (around the same time our US consulate put out an advisory about children being separated from parents for quarantines here). So, where does that leave us? Well, at the moment, we do not have a compulsion or conviction to leave. We are still praying for patience and endurance during this time, and our only plans to go will be to make a temporary (and overdue!) trip to see our families and supporters in America. But we do covet your prayers to endure with peace in this turbulent time.

“But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” James 1:4

Well, with all of that being said, how is everything else in Hong Kong? Praise the Lord, as noted, His work goes on in the midst of these challenges. In fact, as several missionaries and pastors have noted, these stressful times are letting us see more opportunities to invite people to church, to share the Gospel, to make friends, and generally to share the hope that is within us. It is not unusual for people to strike up conversations to find out why we are here, why we haven't left yet, and when they find out we are Christians, to want to learn more about the Faith. We thank the Lord for these opportunities, and ask your prayers that there would be fruit that remains.

Some points of praise: The Herbster family have settled in well here in Hong Kong, and they are a tremendous aid and blessing to our church people, especially in music ministries and with the youth. Further, Pastor Matt has preached while Jonathan has been sick, and they are a great help to our streaming services during lockdown as well. Also, Matt has been able to start a charity ministry here that, Lord-willing, we hope will allow camp ministries and education ministries to grow in the years to come. Contact them at Hope Ministries International if you would be interested in helping here in East Asia once the 'dust settles'! Catherine's teaching at a Christian school here continues to go well; she has opportunities to lead the students and occasionally the teachers in devotionals as well. Pray for the salvation of her students and for her transition to a younger grade level next year. Pray for Nicholas (9), Lucy (12 and turns 13 this week!), and Steven (16!) as they navigate online school right now. Pray too for Steven as he begins to think about college! In addition to preaching weekly (most recently Jeremiah and Ezra), Jonathan is continuing his weekly Bible studies with the brother from the rehab ministry (pray that COVID restrictions will drop so we can return to Dawn Island recovery centre), and has started a new Bible study with a neo-Confucianist philosopher and a church member (pray for Dr L's salvation). Two of his former university students are also meeting with him (H & A), and he has opportunity to teach at two local universities this semester, as well as for our local Bible institute (pray for the upcoming class on Eschatology – End Times!). We're also thankful for opportunities to teach at a distance for Maranatha Baptist University; please pray for a possible apologetics course Jonathan may teach for them later this year. Another praise: Pastor Matt was able to raise funds and bring together a team to get the 'Bridge' Gospel tract printed in traditional Chinese (used here, in Taiwan, and in some Chinese-diaspora communities). Pray that these will be used effectively here.

Thank you for *your* patience as you have waited to receive this update from our family. **As noted above, please let us know if we can connect for an audio or video call – you may reach us most immediately by messaging the number below our sign-off.** We are enduring a challenging season here, and we truly need and appreciate your prayers. But we also want to praise the Lord for His protection and provision during this season, and to thank you for your continued kindness on His behalf.



IBC Ladies fellowship



Kids are getting taller!



Love in Christ,

Jonathan, Catherine, Steven, Lucy & Nicholas

johnsonsinchina@gmail.com

Country code (+852)69046831

Support Address: EOTEM, PO Box 4574, Beeville, Texas, 78104