



Committed to Trust!
Compelled to Go!

Issue #141
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Dear Friends, Family, and In-Pact Partners:

While it's true that we've "kept in touch" with a short note every few weeks, it's certainly not the same as sharing a more comprehensive update every month or so. Since we haven't sent an "official" LUMglobal update since March 27th, there are several bits of information we need to share. In a nutshell, **this has been the most physically, financially, and ministry-wise challenging seasons we have experienced in many, many years – and at the same time, one of the most rewarding.** So, let's get to it ----

++ Winding Down In Yuma:

As we mentioned in our March 27th letter, when the COVID-19 scare hit, our ministry shut down in an instant. We were notified that all of the 20+ Cal-Am RV parks were being shut down, effective March 13th. No "outsiders" were allowed in, all amenities were closed, all activities were discontinued. Residents and guests were to come and go only to shop for necessary items. The Chapel could meet one last time on March 15th.

The Canadian government gave its citizens ten days to get back to Canada without jeopardizing their medical insurance coverage. Since Fortuna de Oro is made up of 50% Canadians, our attendance of 184 on March 8th plummeted to 68 on March 15th. Overnight we lost over half of our praise team, and 80% of our set-up crew. March 15th was one of the saddest days of our ministry since 2008 when we came home from Ukraine. There was no opportunity for our final Sunday celebration potluck, no time to wind down the women's and men's weekly Bible studies, -- no chance to give hugs and handshakes and say good-bye.

In spite of the abruptness with which regular ministry ended, God gave us different and refreshing ways in which to minister. Three became very important, both to us and to others as well: 1) We made special efforts to check on those who remained in Yuma and in the Park (Yes, we have numerous folks who live outside the park but love to attend the Chapel activities); 2) We started inviting two to six people to our park model for "socially distanced" fellowship over ice cream (all total, probably 40 or 50 otherwise lonely people by the time we left); and 3) Bob began video-taping a weekly Bible study, "*Some Thoughts To My Friends*" sitting at the kitchen table, and then posting them each Saturday evening on his Facebook page and sending the link to the Chapel de Oro e-mail list (little did we know how that ministry would develop over coming months!).

Personally, our schedule remained full as Bob spent up to twenty hours a week taping, editing, rendering, reformatting and uploading his video Bible studies and the two of us kept up to four or five doctors' appointments every week, all the way up to the week we left for our ministry in Greer, AZ. We normally go to Greer (or to MO) the very end March or first of April, but because of the "Pandemic", we skipped MO and never arrived in Greer until July 2nd. We have not been home since May, 2019. One final personal thing – we FINALLY sold the ministry 5th wheel! What a great blessing.

++ Grinding It Out In Greer:

The future of the summer schedule in Greer was in doubt up until the middle of May. The Community Center Board of Directors was conflicted as to whether or not we could even use the Center. Half of the Board members wanted to shut the Center down for the entire season. However, since it is a community building, and since the Chapel is a "lessee" renting time and space, the remaining members of the Board prevailed, and the services began on schedule the first Sunday of June. Bob sent the link to his "*Thoughts To My Friends*" video and preached via data projector and screen. Attendance that day was eight people, whereas opening Sundays most years is around 35. The following pics are of the first Sunday of services.



Following all state and federal guidelines, but many members remain fearful to attend. SO SAD!!! Bob now preaches "in person", live-streamed.

For the rest of June, around a dozen met, following COVID-19 guidelines of course, each week and Bob "preached" via videos from Yuma. Then in July we arrived, and Steve was finally able to get a secure enough link that we also began live streaming. Attendance July 5th hit a high of 21. What has been so amazing is that we are actually ministering to more people via live streaming than we usually did each week during a "non-pandemonium" year.

While attendance usually runs in the mid teens, an average of over 70 watch the service via live-streaming, and scores of others pick it up from links posted on the Chapel's Facebook page and YouTube channel (Greer

AZ Chapel). Others watch edited versions of Bob's sermons on his Facebook page and via e-mail links as well. It has ended up being one of the most fruitful and comprehensive ministries of everything we do.

For example, starting the first of May, Steve began keeping count of "views" on the Greer AZ Chapel Facebook page when Bob started sending copies of his *"Thoughts To My Friends"* to be posted on the page. As of the first Sunday of August, between 700 and 800 "views" had been recorded through live feed and video links. This does not count those who have watched via Bob's Facebook page or his links on Sync and GoogleDrive.

Sadly, the guidelines we follow not only keep everyone "socially distanced" and unable to shake hands or hug each other, but they also prohibit the Chapel from doing one of the things it does best ---- sing! Much of our precautions are probably unnecessary, but in order to satisfy the expectations of the Board of Directors and also make some of the "fearful" feel safer, we abide by the federal and state recommended guidelines.

You can imagine how this curtails Jo Ann's ministry in selecting music for the services. Services begin with Jo Ann playing 10 to 15 minutes of hymns and choruses, Steve welcomes everyone, reminds everyone of events and COVID-19 procedures, Bob leads a pastoral prayer, Jo Ann plays a hymn of *"contemplation and meditation"* Bob preaches, we have the benediction, and then we go outside to sing one song -- *"The Family of God"*. While we can hear Jo Ann, she can't hear the people sing. People mingle briefly, and then leave. As the two of us drive away, we both feel exactly the same way almost every Sunday – incomplete and empty.

The missing hugs, handshakes, singing, and fellowship so necessary to feel like you were together with other believers often leaves us sad. Whatever else it seems the Lord is trying to tell His people, is that our way of doing church is pretty far off the mark of what He had in mind. We focus on events and activities – He wants us to focus on relationships. And it's the missing hugs, handshakes, and singing that have reminded us.

And then we remember that many others have it far worse, and we remember how many hundreds of people all around the world and across America are being reached via social media. We are reminded that there may be more seed falling on soil on the other side of "the fence" than is falling inside.

In spite of the inconveniences and low group participation, the ministry has been effective. The Monday women's Bible study has expanded to include both men and women meeting early afternoon and studying David Jeremiah's video series on Philippians. The Wednesday afternoon Bible study remains small in attendance (fewer than 10 each week) but rich in blessings as we watch two video sets by renowned archaeological/historical traveler Ray Vander Laan – "God Heard Their Cry" and "Fire On The Mountain".

The men's prayer breakfast is now a prayer and fellowship gathering running between one and four in attendance. But the time together is good. One of the high points is our Wednesday morning Bible study in our RV park, now in our third season studying the Gospel of John. We finally broke into chapter 14 this year and are now half way through the first half of John 15. This year we have only around six, and sit scattered around two or three tables in the club house. Our denominational backgrounds – Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist, Catholic – make for a wonderful time of discussion and fellowship.

Currently the agenda calls for us to continue the season through September, but if people begin leaving earlier, we may not finish up that month. We usually try to stay well into October because of the beautiful Fall colors, and then head directly to Yuma to begin the winter ministry the first week of November. Depending on what happens with the COVID-19 situation, both schedules may alter somewhat.

++ Personal and Family:

The two of us have had our share of physical challenges, especially since Bob's knee replacement surgery last October. He is now closing in on ten months since the surgery, still having mild aching 24/7. They say, *"9 to 12 months"* -- some saying up to 18 months for full recovery. He is now also having much pain in his left knee, but has decided that unless it is absolutely a "must", he will not have surgery on that knee. It is extremely painful and difficult for him when going up and down stairs and also sitting down and getting up from a chair.

Jo Ann's hand/arm/shoulder problem is better after many treatments and doctor's appointments, but still not completely cured. Our primary care doctor has been baffled by it all. His conclusion is that it has been mainly caused by taking unnecessary medication and a deficiency in Calcium, and D3. She has had at least five blood tests showing her white count to be abnormal. Although it has improved dramatically, it is still a little high, so the Doctor wants Jo Ann to see a hematologist. We are waiting for that appointment to be scheduled.

All those medical appointments, along with more dental work for Bob, new prescription glasses for us both, and hearing aids – (FINALLY!!!!) – for Bob, have consumed both time and money, and kept us incredibly busy in Yuma. While both of us still have some other tests and exams to be done, most of them are behind us, and will probably wait until we get back to Yuma. Bob is seriously considering shots for his left knee.

Our children are all well, also impacted by COVID-19. Cindy and Kevin in Colombia, South America, have been in one form of restrictions since March and will remain highly limited on assembly, ministry, and mobility until at least into September. Debbie and Mike in Colorado are also impacted as Mike is unable to minister to various families and the community shelter as he usually does, and Debbie hasn't taught since last Spring.

Cheri and Bob in St. Paul were "in harm's way" during the early stages of riots and demonstrations in Minneapolis area, and had some riots just a few blocks from their home. They are currently in Oregon ministering to his family as they anticipate the soon homegoing of his mother, Sally. Deanna and Jim in Galesburg, IL, also still feel the impact. Jim's hospice ministry remains highly limited, Deanna continues subbing in various medical clinics, their church continues to meet outside in a yard so they can sing, Michael maintains a good late-night work schedule in spite of restrictions, and JoyLinn finally went back to Olivet Nazarene University this past week-end after the school having been closed since last March.

++ Unplanned Vehicle Change:

One of our biggest personal challenges has involved the sudden loss of our ministry car, the little 2007 Caddy SRX that was given to Life Unlimited a little over two years ago. Just two weeks after we arrived in Greer, a young woman in a large ranch-style/size pickup truck rear-ended it while we were parked at our favorite BBQ

restaurant for supper. Long story, short –the damage to the rear hatch door with all its electronics, the interior floor, the sensor-filled bumper, rock panel, and left rear quarter panel was such that the car was totaled. The impact also drove the car into a large boulder, damaging the front bumper assembly. So, good-bye Caddy.

The settlement was fair for a 13-year-old car, but inadequate for a replacement. We are currently driving a friend's pick-up truck until we can raise funds for a decent replacement. Interestingly, two months ago Jo Ann had been sensing that we needed to somehow return to a larger vehicle for cargo space and Bob's comfort driving back and forth between Yuma, Greer, and Missouri. He still has considerable pain and discomfort from last Fall's knee replacement. As of Friday, between our own funds, the settlement, and gifts from several contributors, we have \$17,250 on hand. And, just Friday we found the car the Lord has for us, far newer than we could have ever dreamed -- a 2018 Dodge Grand Caravan with only 47,000 miles on it. It is beyond our imagination. So, join us in praying that the remaining \$2,750 comes in – fast! It is waiting to be picked up.



The damage to the hatch door alone was over \$5,000, and several thousand more on the rear bumper. We're asking God to replace it with this.

++ Update on Partner Ministries:

> **Arise Ukraine** – Although not officially a part of Life Unlimited Ministries' network, "Arise Ukraine" is a multi-faceted wide-reaching ministry we have often supported in providing coal, coats, and food for people in war-torn eastern Ukraine, trained hundreds of pastors and thousands of young Ukrainians in evangelism, and have helped plant new churches. We want to give a hearty congratulations to Paul Logan and his new bride, Nastia, married August 4th. Paul was the very first person to welcome us to Ukraine in January, 2003, when we first arrived. You can check that ministry out established by Paul in 1997 at <https://ariseukr.com/ministries/>.

> **Joel and Ira Colon** – Some of our dearest friends, Joel and Ira have been part of our lives for over 15 years. Ira was Bob's translator at St. James Bible College and Joel helped plant "Iglesia del Aposento Alto", the first international church we started in Ukraine. They have an outreach ministry through the "Coffee&Flowers Café" (see it on Facebook), and a leadership training, missionary sending, and church planting ministry. Their ministry took quite a hit due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only was the coffee shop shut down, but students were impacted and graduation was held by virtual reality. Several were unable to return home or to the fields where God had called them. If you would like to read their latest newsletter in your browser, go to <https://mailchi.mp/597b9dc713dc/colon-summer-how-have-you-been?e=056f59f073>. We would urge you to take a look. Joel also works directly with the Farsi ministry. More details about that below.

> **Farsi Ministry** -- We continue to be amazed (but not surprised!) at how God is using the Farsi ministry team ("M", "M2", "J", "F", "X", "V" and others) to reach into the Persian speaking people around the world, and especially Afgh+++stan and I+++n. In spite of numerous setbacks, it continues to expand in virtually every area. The COVID-19 situation has affected them as well, though everyone has been safe thus far from the virus itself. Here is an extremely brief summary of recent reports we have received the past few months:

1. **Marriage.** One of the greatest joys to report is that "F", the very first salvation at the beginning of the Farsi work in 2006 got married a few months ago. He and his wife live in Germany where he continues leading the Farsi network there, and enlarges the online Persian language library of Christian books.

2. **Social Media.** With people more confined to home, the traffic on the websites, video feeds, and satellite programs has grown, adding increased burden on the very small team operating from multiple locations.

3. **Bibles.** Another load of Bibles was smuggled into the country before serious winter weather arrived, and the "warehouse" is currently empty. Several thousand Bibles have already been successfully delivered.

4. **Mission work.** Another new church has started, this time in Armenia. A team went there early this year with a friend to baptize 20 new believers (some coming that in secretly from Ir*n), and simultaneously launch "Father's House," the first Persian language Baptist church in the nation. They also performed three Christian weddings. "M2" now leads a weekly online training session. This is an important church because many Ir*nians cross the border to this area for various cultural festivals. This church can openly share the Gospel that most of them have never heard. One of the couples that was baptized plans to return to Ir*n and start an underground church there. Additionally, another church has been planted in Belgrade, Serbia.

5. **Losing the studio.** The studio used for many years shut down several months ago. The Farsi work had been reaching over 15 million people through their satellite programs last year. Since then, a local businessman offered a safe and quiet location rent-free for at least one year. The team has decided to set up their own mini-studio to produce the various videos each month, but help is needed to purchase the cameras, lights, equipment, and green-screen backdrop to complete the studio. Total cost is \$5,500 U.S. Pray for God to supply this need. If you would like to help, please contact Joel Colon at facetofaceprayer@gmail.com.

6. **Belgrade Church.** The Persian church in a refugee camp in Belgrade, Serbia is doing well. "M2" continues to lead services for them online and is working on training leaders.

7. **Face2Face.** The Farsi ministry's "Face2Face" Facebook page has over 200,000 people following it, getting fresh content several times each week. Many subscribers are Muslims whom God has given an interest in learning about Jesus Christ. They have had issues with Facebook blocking some people who want

to subscribe to the page, so please pray that God will make a way for them and sort out this issue. You can check out their page at <https://www.facebook.com/facetoface.ministry/>. There you will see “M2”, “V”, perhaps “M”, and even numerous English language speakers preaching, teaching, and training – and maybe some Farsi praise music, too.

8. Translating Ministry. The Farsi-Reads program continues to translate relevant books and material into the Persian language. Pray for continued finances as people are furloughed from work.

9. Two brief testimonies. 1) *"In a small and remote village of Afg**nistan lives a woman. This woman found out about our website, and after accessing our material for some time, connected with us through Facebook messenger. She prayed online with us and put her faith in Jesus Christ. She is the only believer in her village. Her husband, her children, and all of her relatives are fanatically Muslim. We sent her a Bible to read, but please pray for her safety, and opportunities for her to share her faith without danger."* 2) *"When M2 went to Armenia to baptize and start a church, he met a couple who had traveled from Ir*n for this meeting. The wife became a Christian several years ago through the Face2Face webpage. She regularly shared her faith with her husband, who put up with her beliefs, but as a military commander, was not interested at all in God. She convinced her husband to come with her to Armenia to attend the Baptism ceremony where she would be baptized. As they traveled and she shared more about it, God moved his heart, and he accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior. When they got to Armenia, they were both baptized together. Now they are back in Ir*n, and are part of a weekly online Bible study with 30 other Ir*nians, led by "M2"."*

++ Other Ministries:

We often either don't report or don't hear from a number of other "Timothy's" and "Esthers" who have been part of our missionary lives over the years. Here is what we can report on at least some of them:

> Sergey in Ulan-Ude – From his facebook page, it appears that Sergey Lyakhov in Ulan-Ude, Siberia, recently celebrated his 40th birthday. Sergey was class president in the first graduating class Bob ever taught at St. James Bible College in Kyiv, Ukraine, in 1995. His heart was broken for the Buryatt people, and he, his wife, Ina, and their children have invested their lives there with amazing fruit to show for their faithfulness.

> Timur in Russia – Timur Atabekovs and his wife Natasha, live in Russia where they have faithfully served the Lord in many capacities, and have faced countless hardships and health issues. Recently he and one of their sons traveled to his homeland of Uzbekistan where they became stranded due to the COVID-19 issue. The day they were to leave, their names were taken off the list of approved passengers. As far as we know, they are still there. We'd really appreciate your prayers.

> Louis Liu – One of our key leaders and translator in planting the Chinese church in Kyiv in 2007, Louie, fluent in English, returned to China where he continued to minister. We've not heard from him for a very long time, but saw on his Facebook page that he and his family are now in the U.S. Wish we knew more!

> Our Tanya – Our Cuban "daughter", Tanya, and her husband, Arto, now live in London where they serve bi-vocationally in various ways. She continues ministering to Latino's in London, and they are active in an English language church. Tanya's mother, Lucy, now lives with them after receiving permanent residence as a result of her bout with cancer. Tanya is now a licensed x-ray technician.

> Saied Ziadah – It has been a very long time since we have heard from our Syrian friend, Saied. The last we heard, he was in a refugee camp in Norway and having a hard time with authorities and threats from many Arab Muslims because of his evangelizing. We have not seen a Facebook post since last November.

++ The Past and The Future:

Try to imagine what we feel when we look back and think of all these friends, family members, and so many others with whom God has blessed us. Even in writing today's letter, our minds are flooded with names and memories. We cannot dare count them all. As we look back, the many heartbreaks, hardships, and trials all seem so insignificant, powerfully overshadowed by the blessings God has poured out upon us.

After over 61 years of serving together, we have hardly "a nickel in our pockets", but cannot remember a single time when God did not sustain us and meet our needs. It has been a "life unexplainable" taking us to more than 40 states and over 35 countries. None of this was on our radar screens when we began the journey.

So, what about the future? We wish we knew. We love, love, love our home in the Ozarks (living in 2,700 square feet sure beats 500 in the park model and 250 in the 5th wheel), and our aging bodies increasingly give us cause for concern as they fail us more and more. But when we think of sitting at home, finding a local church with a vision, and losing contact with all our friends in the two chapels in Greer and Yuma, the first thought that comes to mind is "Boring!", followed by restlessness and a continuing sense of urgency that we must keep going until there is no more "going" left. 80's seem so much younger than they used to.

Does this sound odd to you? Everywhere we look we see former colleagues, friends, and others, who are motivated only by comfort, pleasure, financial stability. Why do we feel so differently? We don't know.

All we do know is that the message of the Gospel must still be shared, the return of Christ is nearer than it has ever been, and all the current indicators tell us that the future is both volatile and uncertain at best. We have entered a new era, and it seems that the daylight needed to reap the harvest is drawing darker, and "night is coming when no one can work" (John 9:4).

So, what do we need from you? -- Your continued friendship, your encouragement, your prayer, and your undergirding. There is much yet for us to do. As we thank you again for your faithfulness, please pray for all that we have noted above. If you have questions or comments, contact us as per the information below.

In His Bond, By His grace, and for His Kingdom,
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