

Onward!

April 2020

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The newsletter of the Association of Military Christian Fellowships

Encouragement for Difficult Days



Photo courtesy USDO

As the world deals with the COVID-19 pandemic, military personnel in many nations are being asked to help their countries fight the virus. During times like this, armed forces personnel are

often mobilized to build temporary hospitals, transport medical and other equipment, maintain order, and implement public health orders such as quarantines. As busy as some military personnel may be professionally, their personal lives may be quieter, due to lockdowns. Many military Christians now may be unable to fellowship in person with others due to national lockdowns on group meetings, and the ways military Christian fellowships minister within their nations have also been drastically curtailed and changed.

Yet in all this, God is in control and bringing men and women around the world to Himself. We may not understand or see all that He is doing, but in faith and trust we believe in His goodness and love.

Usually AMCF newsletters contain information about military ministry around the world. This month's issue contains words of encouragement for these difficult days, which we hope will encourage you. Please feel free to forward this to anyone who might be blessed through it.

AMCF PRAYER

The following prayer was adopted by AMCF in 1930 with the suggestion that it be prayed each Sunday:

“Heavenly Father, we thank you that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. Bless the service men and women of all nations, and grant that we who know the joy of being ‘all one in Christ Jesus’ may be filled with your love and pass it on to others through the power of the Holy Spirit until His coming again.”



A Beacon of Hope

General Srilal Weerasooriya,
AMCF president

Every day we have the sad news of unbelievable numbers of people who die and the many thousands who are struck down by this virus and are fighting for their lives.

In the midst of the unprecedented fear and uncertainty looming ahead of us, **the reality of Christ's rising from the dead will stand out as a beacon of hope for all believers.** There might be many of our associates who have no knowledge of the saving grace of Jesus Christ and are floundering in the dark in confusion. I believe that we in the AMCF, who have a worldwide presence, can make a difference by reaching out to our fellow servicemen and women and bringing hope to those who do not know of the Risen Saviour and eternal life.

This is also an opportune time for us who have the great weapon of prayer to pray for those who are discouraged and in fear. As said in Romans 8:28, "We know that all things work together for good to those who are called according His purposes."

Romans 8:37 says, "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor principalities nor things to come nor height nor depth nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So let us be encouraged that Jesus is alive and the Risen Saviour will give us peace, joy, and resurrection hope.

Ministering in 2020

Tips for reaching out to MCF contacts, members, and other armed forces personnel, from Grozdan Stoevski of Military Ministry International.

1. Phone calls mean a lot to people, even if they are just to ask, "How are you?"
2. WhatsApp is good for individual messages and for creating groups to message. It is available on smartphones and for PCs.
3. Facebook's messenger allows instant messaging to individuals and selected groups of people.
4. Facebook's closed groups allows for exchanges of articles, posts, and pictures to a private audience.
5. Public Facebook pages allow for widespread sharing of information and articles.
6. Facebook-created events can be used to share prayer meetings, chat times, etc. You can also choose the "sponsored" option to target a selected audience such as age and geographic parameters.
7. Facebook live streaming is an easy way to share a video of yourself speaking. It doesn't require any special equipment.
8. Websites! If you have a website, you have an audience.
9. Website blogs allows for articles on more specific topics. Also, once the article has been uploaded, it can be shared as a link to Facebook, Viber, etc.
10. The Viber app allows you to send text messages and host conference calls.
11. Youtube channels are free to create and lets you record and upload short videos. This is an excellent tool for teaching, Bible studies, etc. Youtube channel live-streaming is also an option, but that does require additional PC skills.
12. Software such as ZOOM, Jitsi Meet, GoToMeeting, and Skype enables video conversations in groups as well as individual counseling or mentoring sessions. ZOOM also has other features, such as sharing your screen (for instance, if you are doing a Bible lesson with another person).

A serene sunset over the ocean. The sun is a bright yellow orb just above the horizon, casting a long, shimmering reflection across the water. The sky is a mix of deep reds, oranges, and soft pinks. In the foreground, several dark, silhouetted rocks protrude from the water. On the rightmost rock, a seagull is perched, its dark form contrasting against the lighter sky.

I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust."

Surely He will save you from the fowler's snare and
from the deadly pestilence.

He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings
you will find refuge;

His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

from Psalm 91

God whispers to us in our pleasures,
speaks in our conscience,
but shouts in our pain:
It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.

What New Directions is God Leading Us In?

Commander (Ret.) Mike Terry
AMCF vice president for South Central Europe

My current readings in Genesis teach me that **God is always forging new communities**, communities of promise-carriers that He wants to reach outward with blessings, encouragements, life, and hope. The boundaries of that

community are not what the community itself might imagine (e.g., Ishmael was blessed as Abraham's offspring, Abimelech in Genesis 20 had a faith that Abraham had doubted). God's community grows, almost in spite of the faithlessness, fear and weakness of those called to faith: even Abraham, who "believed and it was counted to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15) -- even this father of faith doubted God, lied, prevaricated and tried to bring about God's promise in his own way. Yet God's purpose through him would not be thwarted: God's promise on and in him could not be denied. It would have its fulfilment.

It is always God's purpose to work through His promise-carrying people to bless His creation, and He does this, often in spite of His people's reactions, because He has chosen them.

At the resurrection God, in Christ, forged another new community, the body of Christ, similarly chosen, similarly God's promise-carriers, in spite of their own failures, weaknesses and lack of faith. That community was pushed even further outward by God's grace and unilateral acts at Pentecost and with Cornelius in Acts 10, a story so beloved by we military folk.

These stories make me think and pray about **what direction God would have his promise-carriers (not virus-carriers!) of this generation take**. This global pandemic, which affects everyone equally (as do sin and death), engenders fear and imposes boundaries between people. Where are the boundaries that we, perhaps subconsciously, impose on our own faith life? Let's not merely try to find new ways to keep doing what we've always done, and so stay safe within our own boundaries, but be open to the Spirit's challenge and leading so as to be part of His work in pushing the boundaries of God's new communities ever outwards!





**God is in
Control --
And Above
All Death,
Disease, and
Plague**

Cdr Saleem Akthar Mathew (Retd)
AMCF vice president for South Asia

Glory to the Lord who, by the blood at the First Passover, stopped the angel of death during the plague. It is my prayer that the precious blood of the New Covenant will stop this current plague from our lives, families, loved ones, churches, cities, and every nation on the globe.

On Resurrection Day, raising Jesus from the grave in an ultimate show of His power, God reminded those believers, and all of us who have believed since, that He is in control -- and above all of death, all decay, all disease and all plague then, now and forever. Thus, an immense encouragement to "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice."
(Philippians 4:4)

While rejoicing, let us also remind ourselves of Roman 8:28, and pray together, "Heavenly Father, please use this pandemic to awaken the Church to boldly stand in faith to proclaim the truth that "there is no other name under the heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12) but that of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**"But You, O Lord, are a shield about me,
My glory, and the One
who lifts my head."
-- Psalm 3:3**

1527 Pandemic Advice from Martin Luther



In 1527, the reformer Martin Luther's city of Wittenburg, Germany, was hit by the bubonic plague. In a letter to his friend during the outbreak, Martin Luther wrote:

"I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine, and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance infect and pollute others, and so cause their death as a result of my negligence... If my neighbor needs me, however, I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely, as stated above. See, this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God."



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"I Don't Know Why" Situations

When we have "I don't know why" situations in life, we have to make the hard choice to settle our minds with what we do not know.

Otherwise, the "I don't know why" will sweep us into treacherous currents of doubt and disillusionment.

I do know God is a God of protection. God's love for me is so consuming, He can only have my best interest in mind.

I do know God is a God of provision. God's plans for me are good even if they don't align with mine. He will provide, but probably not in the way I expect.

I do know God is a God who keeps His promises. Others may break their promises, but He never will.

So that's where I park my mind, my emotions, and my trust. It's not the tidiest parking spot on the lot. It doesn't make the loss sting less.

But it's a place I can wad up my runaway emotions and hand them over to my perfectly capable and all-knowing God.

- Author Lysa TerKeurst