

APRIL 2020 NEWSLETTER



The Coronavirus and Its Impact on ITEM's Efforts

What in the world is happening? A virus most of us never heard of before now has spread around the globe in a short time. It has infected more than 1 million people, and now many nations have closed their borders and are requiring their citizens to stay at home in the fight to contain the virus.

In most cases, international travel is not possible. And in the cases where it is possible, it is not safe or wise. We hope and pray all of our supporters and newsletter readers are protected from this deadly virus. May much good come out of this time we are required to stay at home until the virus is contained. May God be glorified as He builds His church and revives and refines it.

How is the coronavirus affecting ITEM? Executive director Tom Smith fields questions from ITEM newsletter editor Matt Crossman.

Everything is changing so fast. Let's just assume every question I ask you is prefaced with, "as you answer these questions in late March." Is everybody who works for ITEM, plus the people who work for the various

churches, seminaries, Bible colleges etc., we partner with healthy?

Yes, by God's grace, everyone involved with ITEM is healthy.

What about the instructors who travel overseas for ITEM—are they healthy?

Yes, as far as we know. They are at home and staying put like the rest of us.

Did any of them have to rush home to beat the travel restrictions?

No, thankfully not. Jim Roszell taught in Kenya during the first week of March and made it safely home on March 7th as originally planned.

What is the status of our mission work?

Classes and a preaching conference planned for March and April have been cancelled. Plans for May and June look doubtful. We are hopeful that classes and conferences planned for July through November will be able to take place as planned.

A March class scheduled for Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary in Riga will be done online through Zoom in April. We are looking at doing other classes online during this time of no travel due to the COVID-19 virus pandemic. We are in regular contact with all our field directors and partners overseas.

Do you have any sense of the long-term implications of this?

All nations will be economically affected this year. The more developed nations will bounce back sooner than the less developed, some of whom will struggle for a longer time.

It is likely that for most of ITEM's students, life will become more economically challenging. The spiritual, cultural and political ripple effects are harder to predict. Hopefully, this pandemic will bring about prayer, repentance and revival within the church.

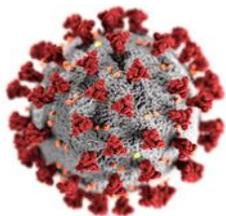
Other than praying, what can subscribers to this newsletter do?

Continue to support ITEM financially. We are training indigenous leaders for ministry around the world and are doing it in one form or another whether face to face or online as cost effectively as possible. Those who care about stewardship will want to invest in the Kingdom by supporting ITEM as we make disciples of all nations.

We need to pray for our leaders, for the doctors and nurses treating COVID-19 patients, for medical researchers looking for a vaccine and best treatments, and for the rest of the world, especially the less developed places like Africa. We must remember that our Lord is in control and holds this world together (Col.1:17). "Not a hair can fall from our heads without the will of our Father in heaven" (Heidelberg Q&A 1).

We do not understand the coronavirus, where it came from, or why it is happening. But we believe God is Sovereign. We believe He can bring good out of this. We believe that He will. We trust Him in all things.

So we pray. As we pray, may we repent and turn to Him. May God revive us, renew us and reform us according to His Word, to the praise of His glorious name.



There's so much misinformation out there. How will ITEM decide when it's safe to resume travel?

We will determine it is safe to travel when the federal and state governments lift the shelter-in-place and social-distancing rules, and when we know from our field directors that their governments have done likewise and the directors think it is safe for instructors to come.

Prayer Requests

1. ITEM is adjusting its teaching in March and April as teachers from the United States are unable to travel overseas. Pray that we make wise decisions throughout this difficult time.
2. Pray for Jacob and Megan Bluebaugh in Kiev. They were expecting their first child in late March/early April. Jacob Bluebaugh was planning to teach at Kiev Regional Bible College in March before the Ukraine shutdown order forced the cancellation of that class.
3. Pray for Dr. Kamphius from Holland who will be teaching via Zoom at Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary in April.
4. ITEM has used a different approach in Kenya. We have sent modules to Daniel Muindi of All Nations College for him and other qualified Kenyan instructors to teach. Also Dr. Abraham Kogo of Miami International Seminary will teach at the College from April 27-30.
5. Pray for the health of all teachers, investors, friends and churches supporting ITEM with prayer and their investments.
6. Pray that ITEM will be creative as it seeks to still deliver quality teaching in these times.

How to Contribute

In the U.S. send contributions to ITEM, PO Box 31456, St Louis, MO 63131 or at www.ITEM.org through PayPal.

Email: lwhesterberg@gmail.com.

Contributions to ITEM in Canada may be sent to:

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