



SEPTEMBER 2020 NEWSLETTER



God's Kingdom Grows in India Despite Problems

By Tom Smith, ITEM Executive Director

India has 3.6 million confirmed cases of COVID19 to date, with daily infections growing at a faster rate than in the United States. A national lockdown earlier this year shrunk the Indian economy by more than 23 percent, and there are still on-going local lockdowns in "hot zones."

Despite these massive hardships, the Kingdom of God continues to expand in Northeast India.

At the Reformed School of Theology (ReST) and the Reformed Bible Institute, classes began Aug. 2 in their on-campus Bachelor of Theology program. They have three young men as full-time students enrolled in that program. They also have distance-learning classes for pastors, elders, deacons and other church leaders.

In late July and early August, nine pastors completed a Biblical Leadership class taught online by Rev. Will Hesterberg, ITEM's chairman. Their papers, projects and final exams were graded by the school administrator.

Also in July, ReST completed and dedicated a new men's dormitory named, "Grace House." A new quarter-mile gravel access road was built without the use of heavy equipment.

In mid-July, a newly constructed church building was opened and dedicated in a village about 100 miles southwest of ReST/RBI. In August, another church in the nearby village of Songtal celebrated a "Thanksgiving of first fruits" ('Haithak') with a full day of worship and celebrations and three sermons.

Due to the economic fallout of the COVID19 lockdown, offerings are down and pastors' salaries have been cut by at least 50 percent. Yet Presbyterian pastors and their wives gathered in August for fellowship and rejoicing at ReST/RBI. It is amazing to see what God is doing in and through his people who are going through much adversity.

This should be an encouragement to us all. These pastors and their wives can say with the Apostle Paul, "For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Cor.12:10).

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.

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Contributions to ITEM in Canada may be sent to:

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Modern Church in Kenya Echoes Early Church History

By Tom Smith, ITEM Executive Director

When the Kenyan government lifted coronavirus-related restrictions and issued protocols, All Nations College ramped up its training schedule for the remainder of 2020. Using a module from ITEM, Rev. Daniel Muindi and Rev. Kenneth Njunguna taught a class on Church History.

The Church History class had been scheduled for April, but it was cancelled due to the lockdown. The class was originally supposed to be taught in Kenya by Abraham Kogo from Miami International Theological Seminary. But a few days before he was scheduled to go to Thika to teach, Abraham had a death in his family and had to cancel.

This last-minute cancellation did not phase Daniel, the director of All Nations College. He reached out for help to his friend Kenneth, who has two master's degrees. They met 17 years ago, when Daniel was working on his own master's degree at Daystar University in Nairobi.

Daniel says they had no problems with the class notes provided by ITEM chairman Will Hesterberg. "We taught the course exploring the rise, expansion, growth and development of the

Church from the ancient period all through to today," Daniel says.

The class saw in the study of church history a demonstration of God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit in enabling the gospel to thrive in times of great persecutions, heresies, tensions, and other challenges from the beginning in Palestine through the centuries to today.

Daniel and Kenneth discussed with students the impact and involvement of the Apostle Paul, the early missionaries, church fathers, their councils and creeds in the spread of the gospel. It was encouraging to note how God used the Roman political system and Greek culture and particularly Greek language in the gospel proclamation to the nations.

They debated and appreciated how God is working in Africa in the expansion of the gospel and demonstration of His grace. God is using people both foreign and domestic as well as using traditional in person oral training and high-speed Internet classes to raise up leaders for his church in Kenya and nearby nations. In Kenya today, it feels similar to the exciting early days of the church.

Prayer Requests

1. Bob Clark and Jim Roszell will travel to Kenya on Sept. 11. This is a big first step as ITEM resumes international travel. Pray they pass their tests and entrance requirements, for safety in travel as well as in Kenya, for Bob teaching Worship and Sacraments and for Jim teaching Christ and Salvation at All Nations College.
2. Pray for Will Hesterberg, who will teach Marriage and Family to three training centers in India online in September.
3. Pray for Juan Patt to recover from a recent illness, for his pastorate and leadership in the Presbyterian Church of Belize's leadership training program.
4. Pray for Gerson Cruz, his family, church and the seminary he directs in Cochabamba, Bolivia, which has been hit hard with COVID19. One of the pastors at Cruz's church died of the disease. Lift up Cruz for health and safety and success in doing ministry in the midst of severe restrictions.
5. For the COVID19 pandemic to be brought under control around the world as it severely impacts people's livelihoods, ministries, and travel.